Jalal Abbasi-Shavazi speech for his farewell on 11 September 2014

Thank you James and Terry for your nice words!
Thank you all very much for coming to lunch today. It is a great honour for me and my family to join you all for this special occasion, though with mixed feelings!

My family and I arrived in Australia on 31\textsuperscript{st} of January 1994, exactly 20 years, 7 months, and 11 days ago! After finishing an English course at the University of Canberra, I started my PhD in July 1994 which was finished in July 1998.

While I was doing my PhD, I was really impressed by the Demography Program, and always wanted to use this opportunity and extend research collaborations to other parts of Asia, and particularly to Iran after my PhD. I remember Gavin Jones was the head of the program, and I wanted to be like him; he was always travelling to do international research collaborations and was only here at the office some of the time!

Fortunately, that dream came true, and I received my Postdoctoral Fellowship before submitting my PhD thesis, and then I had several other Wellcome Trust funded projects which was followed by my last ARC Future Fellowship Project from 2010 to 2014.

So, over the last 20 years, I have been attached to the ANU Demography Program and ADSRI, as PhD scholar, Post-doc Fellow, Adjunct Fellow and Future Fellow. I have really been lucky to be with ANU demography and to have such great colleagues and to be working in such a stimulating and nice environment. I have learned a lot from ANU demography, and it is not surprising that I feel sad to leave ADSRI. I have always wanted to contribute to ADSRI and I hope I have been able to make a small contribution over the last 2 decades. All of you and many others have made life and work at the ADSRI so enjoyable. First, I would like to thank non-academic staff for their valuable contributions to our academic works. In particular, I am grateful to Christel, Louise, Jenny, Gemo, and in earlier years, Milisa, Maria, Diana, Margi, Pat, Wendy and many other colleagues of whom I have forgotten their names, they have offered valuable support for our research and work here at the ADSRI.

Peter McDonald, Gordon Carmichael and Chris Wilson were members of my PhD panel. I still remember Gordon’s writing with his red pen very detailed comments, sometimes with a laugh but sometimes I couldn’t understand why he was not responding to my greetings!

It is unfortunate that Peter is not with us today. He was my PhD supervisor, and later, collaborator. We have had very fruitful and exemplary collaborations. I really owe my academic life to Peter, and am really grateful to him. And of course, he and Helen have been good friends to me and my family over the last 20 years.

Meimanat Hosseini has been working with me and Peter over the last 12 years and we are really thankful to her for the great contribution that she has had to our academic work in these years. She is also a close and good family friend and we have good memories with her and her family in Iran as well.

Terry Hull has been a very good friend and of course, Val, has also been part of this friendship over these years. As you all know, Terry and I have been working on the establishment of the Asian Population Association since 2006. We have also had research collaborations, and discussions. We have travelled together, he has visited Iran several times,
and we are still working together on the APA activities. I have always learnt from Terry’s wisdom and pragmatic attitudes.

Zhongwei Zhao, Adrian Hayes, Sew Ean Khoo, Helen James, have been wonderful colleagues, as I worked with them and have had many fruitful discussions and collaborations. They all visited Iran and have had an experience of Iranian culture and food!

I have also enjoyed learning from David Lucas, Heather Booth, Chris McMurray, and the late Alan Gray during my PhD study by attending their classes and I have always learnt from David’s questions at the seminars.

Ann Evans, Edith Gray, Iwu Utomo and Rebecca Kippen were my classmates during my PhD and I am glad that three of them are still contributing to ADSRI.

Let me also thank James Raymer for his support and encouragement since he came to ADSRI. He has been supportive of my work and I wish him all the very best for not only keeping what the ADSRI has been doing but also to improve the institute to a higher and stronger position.

When we came to the ANU 20 years ago, Ehsan and Azadeh were little kids and would come to the Menzies library to study and practice their English! I remember when Azi attended school for the first time, she did not know how to write her name and she copied from her friends! I am pleased that both Ehsan and Azadeh did their study at the ANU. Ehsan is doing his PhD in Solar Energy, and Azadeh has admission to do PhD in Economics but decided to defer it and do Medicine. Throughout all these years, my wife, Fatemeh has been a great support for us. While we were in Tehran, I used to spend time here at the ANU, and now that they are in Canberra, I spend time in Tehran! Fatemeh has been a great support for me and for family and I could not be where I am now without her kind and generous help.

Lastly, you may want to know where I am going next! As you may know, I have been offered a position as Director of the National Institute of Population Research in Iran. I will continue my position as Professor of Demography at the University of Tehran but will be seconded to the Institute which is appointed by the Minister of Science and Technology. I have around 40 staff members, and we do research on many population issues, and particularly population policies. I will be trying to expand international collaborations, and shall be hosting an international seminar next month. While there, I will continue my collaboration with the ANU and continue my work on refugees. I received visiting fellowship from the CASS and shall come back to the ANU next year, if not before.

So, thank you again for your valuable support and I hope we can see each other either in Canberra or in Tehran.