

Opening of the TAGWA State Conference

1 April 2017

Speech

Mr Torsten Ketelsen, Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany in Western Australia

Good morning and thank you for inviting me to open the 2017 TAGWA State Conference on this beautiful Perth autumn day.

It is wonderful to see so many teachers of German here, in your free time, on a Saturday ready to engage in a day of learning and networking: university students, our language assistants, primary, secondary and community teachers.

I would like to thank all of you for the amazing work you do in your schools every day teaching and promoting German language.

In particular, I would like to thank your amazing TAGWA president Helen Kuehs who works untiringly in the WA school community to promote German as a second language well beyond her own school, Baldivis, and almost always in her own time.

Helen, and so many of you, are active contributors to our German Language Round Table that has made a real impact in the relatively short time that it has been in existence.

Over the last 24 months we have seen an increased German language uptake in primary and secondary schools by over 30%. That is truly remarkable and all of us can be proud of that achievement.

Congratulations to Tanja Colgan and Lois Tidman on their Goethe Institute Scholarship in Germany later this year. Both of you are great contributors to the German Language Round Table and this scholarship is well deserved.

Just yesterday we had a meeting, attended by Helen Kuehs and Katja Ezel (Advisor for the German Central Agency of Schools abroad) with the Associate Principal of the Fremantle College. Fremantle College has merged with Hamilton Hill Secondary School and is now taking in students from 16 Primary schools in the area. They have no language program and, as a result of our visits, are considering taking up German.

At this point I would like to thank Katja Ezel for her wonderful support to our Western Australian effort over the past two years. Katja is based in Sydney but this did not prevent her from visiting us and providing guidance and encouragement. Unfortunately, Katja is leaving Australia and heading back to Germany. We wish her well and will always fondly remember her excellent cooperation and support for us in WA. Of course we hope that the new Advisor for German Schools abroad will be equally engaged and supportive of our work here in WA, a long way from the Eastern States where all the support seems to be focused.



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Perth

Fremantle College is renowned for their Marine Biology focus in WA and we were able to forge closer links in this field, as well, with the forthcoming visit of the German Marine Research Vessel SONNE to Fremantle port in June this year. All of their marine biology students and teachers have been invited to the Open Ship Day on 6th June and their teachers and principal will attend the official reception by the German Embassy at the Fremantle Maritime Museum later that evening. If anyone here today would like to attend the reception – a really good networking opportunity – please let me know and I will make sure you get an invitation.

As the official representative of the Federal Republic of Germany in Western Australia I am engaged in promoting our bilateral relations at every level including economical, scientific and technological and cultural cooperation. Nothing gives me more pleasure and more satisfaction than the work all of us do to promote German culture - and the German language in particular – and seeing the real progress we are making in our concerted efforts.

You all know better than anyone the many benefits for students who speak more than one language – their enhanced long term memory and literacy skills, their higher achievements across the board in all other subjects and their competitive advantage in further study and future career opportunities, in particular with German language skills.

Students who learn languages are also better able to bridge cultural differences and they develop a strong sense of inter-cultural intelligence. This is particularly relevant in a culturally diverse state like Western Australia where people from over 150 different ethnic backgrounds live together in harmony and of course likewise so – in an ever more globalised world.

Language is the bond which connects communities and people.

The work that you all do to promote German language in Western Australia will have the most profound effect in the long term on the bi-lateral relations between Western Australia and Germany as the solid base for friendship, learning and working together both here and in Europe.

You, of course, know all of this – that is why you are here today. That is why you are devoting so much of your free time – so much of your effort – to promoting and teaching German language at WA Schools, Universities and Institutions.

I thank you most sincerely, for your hard work, your commitment, your enthusiasm and your desire to keep German language alive in our schools and in our community and I give you my firm pledge that I will always do what I can to support your wonderful work in any way I can.

I wish you all a rewarding afternoon and I shall see some of you later at the SAGSE Black and White Dance in aid of SAGSE's amazing work for the Australian German Student Exchange.

Danke.

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