

**Welcome address as part of the  
Celebrations of the Day of German Unity**

**Prof Michael Rosemann**

**Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany**

**Brisbane, 1 October 2021**

Meine Damen und Herren, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Friends, Liebe Freunde,

My name is Michael Rosemann, I am the Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany here in Southern Queensland and I would like to warmly welcome you to this evening.

First of all, please join me in thanking the **German Youth Choir** for this splendid performance. I would like to thank every member of the Choir and their supporting parents who have helped with the rehearsals in the lead up to tonight. In particular, and from the bottom of my heart, I am grateful to **Ruth Schwarzenböck** for her tremendous support over the last months. Ruth gave birth to her second child in August, but this was hardly a disruption to her dedication for the Choir.

I am also **thankful for the Queensland Youth Orchestras and Opera Queensland** who join us tonight. You got a first glimpse of their talent just now, and much more to come very soon.

Welcome back to the beautiful facilities of the Mercedes-Benz Autohaus. It has been a pleasure working with the team of Mercedes-Benz Brisbane

and LSH Property Australia, and I would like to thank **Kenneth Got** and **Clare Barker** for the wonderful collaboration over the last weeks and months.

Let me start by respectfully **acknowledging the Traditional Owners** of the land on which this event is taking place and pay my respect to their elders - past, present and emerging.

I would like to **acknowledge our distinguished guests** of tonight

- representing the Premier of Queensland, the Hon. Anastacia Palaszczuk, the **Hon Leanne Linard**, MP, Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs,
- **Mr John-Paul Langbroek**, MP, Shadow Minister for Seniors, Communities and Disability Services, as well as Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
- representing The Right Honourable The Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Adrian Schrinner, **Councillor Vicki Howard**, the Councillor for Central Ward,
- **Mrs Teresa Harding**, Mayor of Ipswich City Council, and her husband Steven Voll
- **Mr Darren Power**, Mayor of Logan, and his wife Lynne
- **Councillor David McLachlan**, MP, Hamilton Ward
- **Councillor Peter Cumming**, MP, Wynnum Manly Ward
- **Ms Melissa O'Rourke**, State Director, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- **Mr Paul Martyn, Director-General**, Department of Energy and Public Works, Queensland Government, and his wife Jennifer
- Mr **Ian Walker**, former Minister for Science, IT, Innovation and the Arts, and President of the Queensland Youth Orchestras, and his wife Heather
- **Mrs Judy Spence**, former Leader of the House and former Minister for Police and Corrective Services, and her husband Heinz Beierer
- **Mr Ian Kemish**, former Australian Ambassador to Germany, and his wife Roxanne

- **Mr Umesh Chandra**, President, Queensland Multicultural Council, and his wife Usha
- The **Dean of the Consular Corps, Irina Bruk**, and my colleagues and friends from the Consular Corps Brisbane who represent 18 countries tonight
- My predecessors in the role of the Honorary Consul for Germany here in Brisbane, **Prof Michael Schütz** and **Mr Detlef Sulzer**

Further distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

sehr geehrte Damen und Herren, liebe Freunde,

welcome to Brisbane German Week 2021 and thank you so much for joining us to celebrate the Day of German Unity this evening. I feel honoured by the presence of each and everyone of you.

Last night, Leona and I watched a quartet of the Gold Coast Symphony Orchestra performing songs from Queen ending with the song '**The show must go on**', and the same is true for tonight. Compliant commitments, agile execution and collective compromises are a sign of today's times, and tonight's event is no exception.

With this, I kindly ask you to please **wear your mask** at all times unless you are drinking or eating, for which you please sit down. Otherwise, please use the evening to meet old and new friends and I trust your COVID literacy otherwise.

Celebrations of this scale are only possible with the help of strong partners, and **I would like to thank**

- Trade and Investment Queensland
- Brisbane City Council

- the German Consulate General in Sydney
- The German Embassy in Canberra
- the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Stiebel Eltron

in turning our ambition for tonight into a reality.

Two years ago, I highlighted the **generation that had never seen or experienced the Berlin Wall** and its true impact. I emphasized the importance uniting with the commitment to ensure cross-generational learning, reflections and informed actions, and the obligation this creates for all of us.

Last weekend, Germany had its federal election. This time a **generation that had never really experienced a Chancellor** different to Angela Merkel was invited to vote. She was the first female Chancellor, by many regarded as the de facto leader of the European Union and the most powerful woman of the world. A global financial crisis, a European debt crisis, an Energiewende incl. an evacuation of nuclear energy, global migration challenges and most recently COVID were some of the significant challenges during her 16 years as Chancellor. As impressive as a leader Angela Merkel has been, **a democratic system rests on the united shoulders, and even more heads, of its citizens**. Nobody in rule-based systems, in Germany or Australia, will take us out of our responsibility as responsible citizens to look after our collective future.

And as we all know, this is a collective future with **significant transformations** - for us as a country, for us as a community and for us as citizens.

The current transformations are most visible for many of us in the **collective compromise** that we make, for example in the COVID-compliant conduct of tonight.

For some of you, they have materialised as **corporate compromises**, and here I am looking at Boris and Kim, who had to experience the emotional and commercial shifts when the only Oktoberfest became no Oktoberfest. I also look at Gert-Jan de Graaff, the CEO of Brisbane Airport Corporation, and Daniel Geschwind, the Chief Executive of the Queensland Tourism Industry Council, who both join us here tonight.

And as a Consul, I witness many **individual compromises** since March last year when our citizens cannot go home to see their loved ones, attend to those in need. Desperate and devastated they have to compromise to help us to protect public health.

We are very mindful of the economic and emotional price that is currently paid.

However, 2021 will also be remembered for the German-Australia community as **a year of exceptional progress, impact and scale**, and I would like to share a few examples across research, business, politics and culture in the following.

First, let me start, no surprise, with the Australian-German **research progress**.

On 19 April, the President of the **TU Munich**, Prof. Thomas Hofmann and UQ Vice Chancellor Deborah Terry AO signed a MoU for a flagship partnership between their two universities making UQ only the third such strategic partner of the TU Munich globally. 11 years after their first

agreement, this has been not just a big step for both unis involved, but for the AUS-GER research community overall. This involves the global bioeconomy alliance with Sao Paula State University enabling research that is alive 24 hrs each day.

I would also like to thank UQ, and Sally Wilson is here to join us tonight, and Study Queensland for their tremendous support of the **Queensland Falling Walls Lab** which took place in August. The strength of our local research is demonstrated by the fact that one of the three Australian finalists who will take part at the global competition in Berlin next month is Mr Chamikara Liyanage from QUT.

When we initiated Brisbane German Week in 2016 and with it a German-Australian Science and Innovation Day, little did we know that we would give birth to the **Australian-German Research Network**, a community that now comprises nearly 1,500 members across and beyond both countries making it one of the largest community of researchers Australia maintains.

And for the very first time, we will have a **Max-Planck-Centre** at an Australian University, and it will be here at QUT in Brisbane. The Max-Planck Centre Queensland will open early 2022 under the leadership of Prof Dietmar Hutmacher and you can learn more about it at the German-Australian Science and Innovation Day at Griffith Uni next week.

**Second**, let me elaborate on the **economic progress** we have jointly made.

On 26 May, our Premier, the Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk, announced the new office of **Trade and Investment Queensland** in Germany. TIQ has some sort of presence since 1860 in London. This will be the first European

TIQ Office outside London and of utmost significance for the future relationships between Queensland and Germany. On behalf of the German Missions here in Australia, I like to express our **gratefulness to Paul Martyn, the former CEO of TIQ as well as to Toni Brownie** who are both with us here tonight. It has been a pleasure working with you over the last two years on this initiative and we are beyond excitement with regards to this significant commitment you are making. The various opportunities here are amplified, for example, by the **hydrogen accord** signed between Germany and Australia in June or the **Free Trade Agreement** between Europe and Australia that we will hopefully see signed early next year.

To strengthen the voice of Europe in Brisbane, we launched together with our Lord Mayor and the EU Ambassador to Australia Dr Michael Pulch **EUREQA – the European Union Economic Queensland Alliance** on this year's Europe Day in May. EUREQA will be your go-to-place in terms of all matters related to Europe, and I am grateful to my consular colleagues from Italy, Spain, Belgium, Malta, Greece and Poland for their wonderful collaboration here.

Trade and investment comes nowadays in many forms. Beyond the traditional forms, we will see an increased **flow of venture capital** between Germany and Australia.

When four weeks ago, on 7 September, Microsoft announced globally that it acquired **Clipchamp**, it made its co-founder Leipzig-born Dr Alexander Dreiling, the probably most successful German entrepreneur who entered Australia over the last 190 years of history. Clipchamp will be for years an exception, and an inspiration, as it represents the type of talent, ambition,

global mind and contemporary capability that will create new customer experiences, catalyse innovation and ultimately create new jobs.

In order to cater for the growing scale of German-Australian trade and investment we decided locally to take one significant step forward in terms of aligning those associations dedicated to it. We worked for most of this year on the **fusion of the German Australian Business Association (GABA)**, an organisation that proudly can look back to 38 years of history and impact, and I warmly welcome GABA's co-founders **Gerda Wittenberg** and **Bernhard Jan Wenzel Graf van Berga** in the audience, and **the Queensland Chapter of the AHK**, representing one of the world's leading chambers of commerce. It gives me great pleasure on behalf of everyone involved, to announce tonight that from now on **iGABA – the innovative German-Australian Business Alliance** will be your local organisation for all economic, business and trade matters. iGABA has been the creative inspiration of the King of all Cakes and GABA President Wolfgang Kelke. I very much also like to thank GABA's Secretary Leon Stephan as well as Tea Dietterich and Michaela John from AHK for their commitment to uniting ambitions and networks for the greater benefit.

iGABA will be AHK's strategic partner in Queensland and we will not only share more about iGABA at the **German Business Day** next week, but also at a dedicated function on 12 November at, dare I say it in front of Kenneth, BMW, when we will officially launch iGABA.

**Third**, we have seen exceptional progress in the **cultural relationships** between Queensland and Germany this year. Two years ago, **I promised you Boris and Beethoven. We gave you Boris Becker** in January last year, and conductor Dane Lam gave you an impressive interpretation of

Beethoven's 9<sup>th</sup> symphony earlier this year. Australia's acting legend Robyn Nevin performed **A German Life** at QPAC, Andrew McNamara conducted an impressive **Bauhaus exhibition** and you can go these days to GOMA and admire 500 year old paintings by the German artists **Hans Holbein and Lucas Cranach** as part of the European Masterpieces exhibition. The **German Film Festival** has been a huge success this year with 24% more tickets sold in comparison to 2019.

Cultural progress also comes in the form of individuals such as **Ingo Pott**, who as an architect contributed to the Dome on top of the Reichstag and who arrived recently from Berlin and who joins us tonight as well **Simon Hewett**, the Musical Director of the QYO, who returned with his family back from Germany where we was Principal Conductor of the Stuttgart Opera and the Hamburg Ballet.

Fourth, I like to briefly highlight the **political progress** we have made.

We welcomed our **Ambassador Dr Thomas Fitschen** in March for a series of conversations with all relevant stakeholders to Brisbane. The Australia-Germany 2+2 Ministerial Consultations are progressing and Germany's Indo-Pacific strategy is our clear commitment to this region and a sign of our awareness for the fragility of global supply chains. The **German frigate Bayern**, one of only 10 of its kind in Germany, has docked in Fremantle two days ago. This naval deployment is the first such mission to Australian in 20 years and Germany participated as an observer nation for the first time this year at Exercise Talisman Sabre.

**Fifth**, finally and very briefly, let me speak about the **local progress** as we want to ensure that progress does not just remain global, but becomes tangible for all of you.

This is why we keep on investing our attention and resources into initiatives such as the **German Language Roundtable**. As part of this community, we have started to setup a project in which we connect students from **Kenmore State High** with significant German companies to facilitate real-world experiences. The Roundtable was also the birthplace of the **German Kino Club** under the leadership of **Lucas Medcraft** and the **German Youth Choir**. More recently, and maybe more of interest to many of you, a monthly **German Stammtisch**, has been created.

Meine Damen und Herren, you can see the Queensland-Australian partnership is not just alive but striving.

The last song you just heard, 'Auf Uns', included the lines

*Ein Hoch auf das, was vor uns liegt  
Dass es das Beste für uns gibt  
Ein Hoch auf das was uns vereint*

Celebrate what lies ahead, it might be the best for all of us, celebrate what unites us.

Tonight, we do not just celebrate the German Day of Unity, we should celebrate a Day of Unity as unity makes dealing with transformational challenges and capitalising on new opportunities easier.

The strong believe that a united approach will be *the* path into a positive future will always shape our actions while further strengthening various bridges between Queensland and Germany.

**Brisbane German Week** is our offer to you to make the most out of the current transformations. For the sixth time we present you a series of events covering a language competition in partnership with the Goethe Institut, the German Business Day at SAP, the German Science and Innovation Day at Griffith, a German Arts evening at GOMA, a German movie night at the Elizabeth Theatre and our surprisingly popular Let's Sauerkraut cooking show in partnership with Miele. Just watch out, this year, the Story Bridge and the Victoria Bridge will be lid up in the colors of the German flags on the evening of the German Day of Unity, i.e. tomorrow evening already.

With this, **I declare open the 6<sup>th</sup> Brisbane German Week** and very much hope you will take full benefit of it. Thank you very much.