

ADDRESS AT THE CONFERENCE DINNER

by Dr Christoph Müller, Ambassador for Germany

It is a great pleasure and indeed an honour to address this distinguished forum and have the opportunity to meet with members of one of Germany's most prestigious science organisations at their Biennial Meeting. Attending the meetings of the Australian and New Zealand Associations of von Humboldt Fellows has been a continuum during the last four years of my posting in Australia: only three weeks after arriving in Australia in 2011, I had the pleasure of attending my first "Humboldtianer" meeting, followed by a Humboldt Colloquium in 2013, and this year we meet again in Hobart – the first time that the meeting is held in Tasmania.

To date, the Humboldt-Foundation has supported 616 Australians and 133 New Zealanders as well as 150 Lynen Fellows. Nearly 1000 academics form an Australian-New Zealand network of Humboldtians. This network lives through the work of the Associations of fellowship holders. Only due to these Associations is it that the Alexander von Humboldt Community in Australia and New Zealand presents itself as a strong and thriving alliance with a great number of current and former fellowship holders working at the forefront of academic cooperation and progress.

Intercultural exchange in science was triggered by Humboldt himself, and it is Humboldtian in character that much of the inspiring research presented at the conference was only possible through international exchange and collaboration. This is reflected in the theme of this meeting: "Global Perspectives, Local Knowledge". We are right at the core of one of the most decisive developments in international science: enhancement of international scientific cooperation. This is key to success at a time when the world is becoming an increasingly interconnected global network.

Occasions like this conference provide the perfect setting for researchers to interact and to receive new impulses for future projects. These networking opportunities are of growing significance since the educational and research sector worldwide has undergone major changes. The allocations of responsibilities between public and private research are in a state of flux, opening a broad range of study and research possibilities for students and scientists worldwide.

What is the German Government doing about it these days? Despite Germany's excellent reputation as an educational stronghold, it is becoming increasingly challenging for German universities to compete in the

globalised education market. The only way to meet these challenges is to realise that there cannot be excellence in education without international relations at its core. If Germany, as one of the world's most innovative and export-oriented nations, wants to stay at the forefront of research developments, it is of paramount importance to promote cooperation with universities and other educational providers worldwide.

Germany is a country with few natural resources and economic growth depends on science and innovation. Germany therefore invests heavily in Research and Development, including internationalisation of science and research. Despite general cuts to the federal budget in recent years, the German government has increased expenditure for R&D by 65% since 2005 to 14.9 bn Euro in 2015, with the German industry also being a major investor in science. This investment translates into growth: Germany is a world-leader in export of R&D intensive goods and holds a 12% share of world trade in research intensive products. Since 2005 over 100 000 new jobs were created in the German research sector.

Germany also supports a variety of initiatives, programs and foundations to foster international exchange in science and research – the Humboldt Foundation and the German Academic Exchange Service are two well-known and highly successful examples. The German-Australian academic communities have developed close ties, with currently nearly 600 cooperation agreements involving German and Australian universities.

Germany has a strong interest in strategic bilateral relationships with Australia. After signing of the Berlin-Canberra Declaration of a Strategic Partnership in 2013, the high-level Australia-Germany Advisory Group (AGAG) was established in 2014 to discuss how bilateral relations could be intensified, with cooperation in science, education and innovation at the forefront. Only a week ago, on 13 November 2015, the recommendations of the Advisory Group were presented to Chancellor Angela Merkel and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull in Berlin.

As we can see, Australia and Germany nurture intensive ties concerning research, with much more potential to explore. But successful developments like this would not have been possible without continuous activities by educational institutions such as the German Academic Exchange Service and the Alexander von Humboldt

Foundation, both of which play an important role in maintaining and expanding scientific cooperation between Germany and Australia.

The German Embassy is pleased to be able to support this Humboldt conference, and to encourage continued and productive German-Australian and German-New Zealand research collaborations.

I wish all the members of the Australian and New Zealand Associations of von Humboldt Fellows a successful and thought-inspiring conference.

Dr Christoph Müller

Ambassador

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