

Single Language Association Feature Article - German

30 Year Anniversary of the AGTV



Association of German
Teachers of Victoria Inc.

CELEBRATING THE PAST - IMAGINING THE FUTURE

by Catherine Gosling

Ten years before the Berlin Wall came down, the Association of German Teachers of Victoria (AGTV) was founded at the first Annual General Meeting held at the Goethe-Institut (GI) on the 24th April in 1979, having previously been a sub-committee of the MLTAV. I doubt if that first Committee would have envisaged how the AGTV would develop to include 12 Networks throughout Victoria and a National Network of Teachers of German (NATG). However, each Committee has remained faithful to the aims and purposes of the constitution. More than 150 different people have been elected to the Committee in the past 30 years to deliver a broad range of services for teachers and students.

An initiative of the first Committee and spurred on by the Goethe-Institut in Melbourne was the production of a teachers' journal *SZENE*. The first issue appeared at the MLTAV Congress in May 1980. From early days there were interstate subscriptions and from 1983, the South Australian German Teachers Association (SAGTA) included *SZENE* as part of their membership. In 1987 there were interstate convenors for *SZENE* in SA, ACT, NSW, QLD, TAS, and WA. It continues to be published by the AGTV

in cooperation with the Network of Australian Teachers of German.

In 1979 the AGTV sponsored its first scholarship through the Society for Australian-German Student Exchange, making 30 years of continuous sponsorship through SAGSE. In the same year a Year 10 Camp was held to involve students in an immersion weekend as there was almost no opportunity for students to travel to a German-speaking country. This year there are well over 60 partner-school exchanges for German in Victoria alone.

The AGTV coordinated its first student exchange through the *Bayerischer Jugendring* (BJR) in 1988. This ongoing program has enabled more than 1000 students from schools across Victoria the opportunity for personal development and intercultural learning through a 10-week reciprocal exchange with students in Bavaria.



In 1994 the AGTV received a seeding grant from the Victorian Government for a pilot project to establish state wide teacher networks. Building on the contacts developed through German advisers and consultants and with the support of the Goethe-Institut, formal networks throughout Victoria came under the umbrella of the AGTV and are the heart of our organisation.

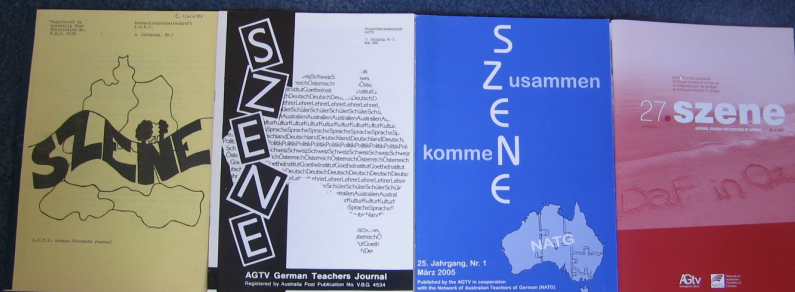
Where the Committee coordinates state wide programs and central administration, Networks organise themselves to meet local needs and receive information shared through electronic networks. Each year the AGTV funds its volunteer Network Leaders to attend a dedicated conference to promote collaborative relationships with the Committee and Goethe-Institut personnel, using funding to the AGTV from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

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Celebrating the Past

30th Anniversary of the AGTV

Imagining the Future



In 1993 a poetry competition hosted by the AGTV was founded for students throughout Victoria for Years 8 and 9. In 1994 the competition was extended to include Years 5 and 6, and later Year 7. The competition developed alongside Networks and was a catalyst for teachers to join networks and organise Regional Finals for students to progress to the State Final. It has been an extremely successful promotional activity for the AGTV in schools and local communities.

The Goethe-Institut supports AGTV Networks through the provision of Resource Centres hosted in each AGTV Network and LMERC. Materials worth more than \$15,000 in each centre can be borrowed by teachers and students to support learning programs. And of course the Goethe-Institut funds scholarships to Germany each year for teachers and students and sponsors cultural events for the wider community.

What began as an immersion weekend workshop in Warburton with the Goethe-Institut, has now become the AGTV/GI Victorian State Conference with local, national and international presenters. It consistently receives registrations from across Australia and evaluations overwhelmingly show it is considered an inspiring conference and a fantastic opportunity for developing professional and personal relationships with colleagues across Victoria and beyond.

For the past 10 years, a partnership between the AGTV and the Austrian Ministry of Education's *Kultur und Sprache* Department resulted in a keynote speaker from Austria attending Victorian and National conferences, highlighting that German is spoken as a first language in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein (DACHL) in Europe, where German is also the second most commonly used language after English. The AGTV has facilitated the Austrian guest presenting in other states and territories.

The AGTV launched its own website in 1997, well before the Department funded the *LOTElinx* project. The AGTV coordinated the development of *Germanlinx* and *Careerslinx* and manages all sites. A new single website is currently under development. Many German teachers have embraced new technologies for the creative opportunities to communicate and engage students.

Grants from DEECD enable many initiatives to continue, including the popular German Day Out organised by the Goethe-Institut and AGTV. In 2009 over 1500 students and teachers attended the student forum in the Melbourne Town Hall and enjoyed the program from SBS with Rappers from Germany sponsored by the Goethe-Institut on the main stage at Federation Square.

The AGTV was instrumental in facilitating the foundation of the Network of Australian Teachers

of German (NATG) in 2002. The Goethe-Institut Australia now hosts a national electronic network as well as the NATG website *AusDaf*, and funds an annual meeting of representatives from each state and territory. At NATG meetings we develop personal contacts, share experiences and resources and explore cooperative opportunities to promote German. The success of the German Day Out in Victoria has led to the concept being investigated for application in each state and territory.

The GI German School Film Festival was initiated in Melbourne in 2003 and is a national project with awards for films in German in the Early, Middle and Later Years categories for each state and territory. The AGTV sponsors the prizes for Victoria. The first national festival was judged in Melbourne this year with interstate participation trialled via Skype.

The one constant with the AGTV since 1979 has been change. Teachers have grappled with the new German writing system, new maps of Europe, ongoing curriculum reviews, swings in government funding and school support for languages, and the unprecedented development of technology. Whilst the foundation skills and knowledge needed to learn German remain largely unchanged, the potential to engage a greater number of students has changed significantly with the tools of modern media and a deeper understanding of how the brain works and how students learn.

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German teachers are known for their willingness to develop and share resources and experiences in meeting current and new directions in education. Through the personal and professional relationships developed

within the AGTV and NATG networks, teachers of German are well-placed to share the challenge of implementing a national curriculum.

The AGTV is grateful for the ongoing partnership with the Goethe-Institut and funding support from DEECD. Thanks to past and present Committees, Network Leaders, members, German advisers and consultants, the personnel and volunteer interns at the Goethe-Institut and other committed supporters for all contributions over the past three decades.

The AGTV will continue to support the teaching and learning of German through its Committee and Networks while members across Victoria continue to offer their professional expertise and personal time for the benefit of all. With a proud past and the launch of a new logo, together we can navigate the challenges ahead. *Deutsch für die Zukunft!*

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