

Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the AGTV-BJR Exchange in 2018

The Association of German Teachers of Victoria Inc. has facilitated a 10-week reciprocal exchange program with the *Bayerischer Jugendring* (BJR) in Germany since 1988. The AGTV is a registered Student Exchange Organisation (SEO) with the VRQA in Victoria and TASC in Tasmania. South Australia also runs a BJR exchange. Students from Australia begin the exchange when they are in Year 10 or 11, having applied and been successfully matched in the previous year.

Each year, around 40 to 50 Victorian students are matched, and then each live as a member of each other's family and attend school in the host county. This is an affordable self-funding exchange. Families pay the travel, insurance and pocket-money for their child and costs of hosting the student. The Victorian students also have the option of a Study Tour to Berlin organised by the BJR in Munich. The AGTV charge a modest fee to recoup costs including administration, insurance and registration as an SEO fees.

Successful Exchange Program since 1988

Over the past 30 years, over 1500 Victorian students and their families have connected with 150 students and their families in Bavaria, a remarkable commitment to intercultural exchange facilitated by the AGTV and BJR. The AGTV is grateful to the students and their families for their interest and enduring enthusiasm in what can be a challenging experience for the whole family.

The University of Regensburg conducted research into the long-term effects of a reciprocal student-exchange with students involved in the BJR exchange with Australia and confirmed the significant positive impact the exchange has had on the personal development of students including improving relationships with their own family members, intercultural understanding, and commitment to learning German or English. Annual evaluations continue to confirm the benefits of this exchange.

Behind the Scenes

Successful exchanges don't just happen.

The Committee is most grateful to the whole team in the BJR office in Munich for their professional and friendly collaboration over the years and skills in the matching process. Gerhard Böttcher was the contact from the first exchange until his retirement in 2014. Gerhard was presented with Life Membership of the AGTV at the 20th Anniversary Celebration at the MCG in 2008. Tom Angermeier, a former BJR exchange student and Group Leader to Australia, has been our contact at BJR since 2014 and continues to strengthen the professional and personal relationships with the AGTV.

The AGTV and BJR are grateful to the schools for supporting this program, especially the contact teachers in their role as local area coordinators. We are also thankful for the many Group Leaders have accompanied students to Germany to support them throughout the program, some of whom did so on more than one occasion, such as Rudy Schrama from Stawell Secondary College.

Thanks also to Margaret and Meghan from East Burwood Travel for coordinating the travel arrangements for the group, and who attend family information pre-departure meetings. The AGTV is grateful to Star of the Sea College for offering the use of their facilities to hold meetings over many years.

Without doubt, the exchange would not be possible without our wonderful AGTV coordinators. They deal to the day to day operational matters including considerable administrative tasks and personal contact with BJR, families, schools, Group Leaders, travel agents, as well as applications for registration and reporting to respective government authorities.

AGTV-BJR Coordinators

Ellen Dunn coordinated the first exchange which travelled in 1988. Eva Conway took on the role of AGTV-BJR Coordinator for many years, followed by Pauline Rogan, Heather Rae, and Catherine Gosling in the interim before the appointment of Christine EkinSmyth in 2002.

Christine is stepping down from this role in 2018. We extend our warmest and heartfelt thanks for her professional services and extraordinary commitment to the program. Christine has been the face of the exchange for 18 years. She has seen siblings from entire families participate, and, in the time of being involved in her teaching career, the children of past exchange students.

Changing of the Guard

The Committee has appointed Brigitte Ankenbrand to coordinate the program with the endorsement of BJR in Munich. Brigitte has been an active member of the BJR subcommittee and support to Christine since 2003, attending Bush Dances (no longer held), Picnics and Pre-Arrival and Pre-Departure meetings. Both of her daughters have been Group Leaders, and her family has hosted Group Leaders from Bavaria at different times. Brigitte has also been a Vice-President of the AGTV since 2005.



Get involved

We encourage teachers interested in the AGTV-BJR Exchange to become involved in the subcommittee and to encourage students to accept the challenge of applying for this exchange. It is life-changing.

Details about the exchange can be downloaded from the AGTV website under Scholarships and Exchanges.

In 2017, the AGTV sent a commemorative video about the exchange to Munich for BJR's 70th Anniversary. This can be viewed on the AGTV VIMEO website: [tinyurl.com/y96km2zm](https://www.vimeo.com/y96km2zm)

Catherine Gosling

President, AGTV Inc.