



Honorary Consul
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Brisbane

The History of the German Honorary Consul in Brisbane

2nd Edition

Prof Michael Rosemann

Launched as part of the German History Day
Brisbane German Week 2018

10 October 2018
(revised 27 January 2020)

Foreword

Documenting history is one the most powerful forms to put time into context. It is much needed to rescue otherwise fragile information and helps us to understand previous, current and emerging decisions and outcomes.

The globally approximately 350 Honorary Consuls of the Federal Republic of Germany play an essential role in creating history at the intersection of German developments and the region they are serving as they provide important additional capacity to the German diplomatic missions and consular posts. In this role they are not just only a local touchpoint for Germans, but are also deeply involved in all regional matters at the interface to Germany. This is also true for one of the Consuls who, with 15,670 km to Berlin, has one of the longest distances to the German capital Berlin, the Honorary Consul in Brisbane, one of currently seven German Honorary Consuls in Australia.

The history of the German Honorary Consul in Brisbane started in 1855 and is a colorful, rich story shaped by tremendous political, economic and societal developments. It features public dignitaries from all areas of our society including adventurers and explorers, miners, merchants and farmers, lawyers and doctors, scientists and politicians. Each of them shaped during the time they served the Germany-Queensland relationship in a unique way and appropriate to the setting of their time.

This booklet aims to help you in getting to know the history of our German Honorary Consuls here in Brisbane and hopefully provides simple reading pleasure to anyone who enjoys taking part in a historical journey.

I am honored to continue this rich history and felt obliged to capture this as a counter-balance to the often dominating focus on the busyness of today and the fast emerging tomorrow. It has been an insightful experience to craft this document, one Consul at a time, until the end-to-end documentation was finalised. Equally, it has been rewarding to understand more about and ultimately learn from my predecessors through the required document studies and conversations with witnesses and descendants. In particular, I am extremely grateful to Roisin Goss, Honey Heussler and John Wienholt for their tremendous support.

I like to thank everyone who contributed to finding the facts, stories and pictures required to write this document. This includes in particular my predecessors Erik Finger, Detlef Sulzer and Prof Michael Schütz. Dr Ian Marshall AE, grandson of Josiah Beiers, as well as Dr Max Brändle, OAM, who sadly passed away in March 2019, provided valuable input when public information was not available. This is a living document and we continue to appreciate any further input that will help to make this booklet an even more complete and accurate summary of the German Honorary Consul in Brisbane.

*Michael Rosemann
Brisbane, January 2020*

The History of the German Honorary Consul in Brisbane

A brief overview of the first German settlers in Queensland

Dr John Dunmore Lang, leader of the Presbyterian Church in Australia, visited Europe in 1836-37. During this trip he was successful in getting financial assistance from the British government to fund mission work in New South Wales. The necessary missionaries, however, recruited Lang when he appealed to Pastor Johannes Gossner (1773-1858), a minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Berlin. Gossner gathered a party consisting in total of seven families (and their 22 children) and a diverse skillset including a farmer, mason, cabinet maker, blacksmith, etc.¹ They became known as the *Gossner Missionaries* and arrived on 3 March 1838 in Moreton Bay.² Soon after they established themselves in South-East Queensland in an area that is today known as Nundah. The missionaries named it 'Zion's Hill', a biblical reference to the place of Christ's return, and started clearing the land and building houses on 650 acres on both sides of Kedron Brook³ (now parts of Nundah and Toombul) that were set aside by the Colonial Government. Circumstances were difficult as government funding was limited and looking after the basic necessities of life, and not their missionary activities, had to become a priority.

In 1842, the 80 km exclusion zone surrounding the convict settlement, a rather brutal penal colony created in 1824, was broken down and the Moreton Bay area was released for open settlement leading to an increased inflow of German settlers, and the end of the missionary work. It is worth noting, that the German explorer Ludwig Leichardt (1813-1848?) visited Zion's Hill in 1843.

A new momentum was created when Pastor C.F.A. Schirmeister arrived in 1857 and started to minister the Lutherans over a large area. The German Station State School⁴ opened on 2 October 1865. Even the first train station in that area was named 'German' in 1882, but re-named 'Nundah' already six weeks after the opening.

The 1860-1880 period was a peak of German emigrants and it is estimated that around 10,000 landed in Brisbane during these two decades. The industrial growth in Germany and the severe drought in Queensland around 1890, however, brought a quick end to the stream of German emigrants.

Consequently, German Consuls representing smaller German states and kingdoms were also among the very first Consuls to be seen in South-East Queensland. The first German Consul, Georg Appel was married to the daughter of Pastor Johann Gottfried Hausmann (1811-1901).

¹ An impressive overview about these families can be found at St Paul's Lutheran Church in Nundah.

² Making it the fourth mission to Australia overall.

³ The missionaries named it initially *Kidron* Brook after a brook near Jerusalem.

⁴ Re-named in 1895 to Nundah State School.

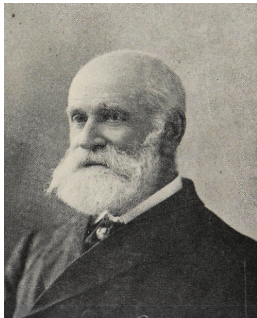
German Honorary Consuls (1855-1871)

Until Germany's unification into an integrated nation state in January 1871, the area that became Germany consisted of separate, independent states and kingdoms, which had their own consul postings. In return, before the Federation in 1901, Australian colonies maintained their own relationships with Germany.

The following list shows that small states such as Oldenburg were among those states looking for representation in Australia. The first German Consuls have been Georg Appel, Vice-Consul in South Brisbane (representing Hamburg, 1855-1871), Reinhard Francksen (1860-1863) and Armand Ranniger (1866-1868), both representing Oldenburg, Julius Brabant (1864-1868) representing Bremen and Daniel Wienholt (1864-1865) representing Hannover until the state got annexed by Prussia, with responsibility for Moreton Bay and Ipswich.

The information these Honorary Consuls sent to Germany was often published in the newspapers of emigration societies and was well received by intending emigrants. Most Consuls at that time were successful German businessmen, doctors or lawyers living permanently in Australia. Their central task was to promote trade between the German state they represented and the Australian colony or state they lived in. There was substantial social prestige associated with being a Consul, and the role was valuable for building credibility and trade contacts that helped their own business.

This also was the case for the very first German Consul in 'the Colony of New South



Wales'⁵, **Georg⁶ Appel**, who represented the Free Hanseatic Republic of Hamburg as a Vice-Consul between 1855-1871. Born on 19 August 1823 in Hesse-Kassel, Germany, he was 15 when he started working at the Goldsmiths Bank in London. Georg Appel came to Australia in 1851 on the steamship *Chanson* and started working on the gold escort track in Victoria for two years at the peak of the gold bonanza before relocating to Moreton Bay. There he became a merchant specializing as a sheep broker in importing sheep from overseas and selling them on to locals. His 'sheep station' was in an area that now belongs to Highgate Hill. Appel quickly earned a reputation in the community and established connections with his international trading partners. He was a foundation member of South Brisbane's first Lutheran Church, the Nazareth, now located in Hawthorne Street, Woolloongabba. Appel also became an Official German interpreter.

Those connections eventually led the city of Hamburg to appoint Appel on 2 November 1855 as Vice-Consul, to preserve and promote the existing trade and shipping connections. This made him the very first Honorary Consul across all nations in Brisbane (Pixlex 1973). Appel was prominent in Brisbane's German community (in 1857 consisting of some 435 people). His instructions from Hamburg were *"To bring to the notice of and to order all ships' captains, their commanders and their crews who sail under the flag of Hamburg (as well as all*

⁵ Note Queensland was removed from the colony of New South Wales and became a colony only on 10 December 1859 with the proclamation by George Bowen.

⁶ Sometimes also referred to as George.

citizens, natives of the city, and their families) to regard and acknowledge the aforesaid Herr George Appel at South Brisbane as our Vice-Consul".⁷ It is worth noting that at that time, approx. 1,400 of the roughly 18,000 people living in Queensland were of German birth, i.e. nearly 8%.⁸ Furthermore, at that time Hamburg ranked third in number of vessels and fourth in number of tonnage arriving in Australia, all reasons for Hamburg to appoint a Vice-Consul.

On 9 February 1858, Appel married Maria Jane Haussmann⁹, daughter of Pastor J.G. Hausmann, one of the Nundah Missionaries.

Appel was the very first consular agent of any nation in the Moreton Bay area and continued as a Consul until 1871 when the office was abolished. Appel was an enthusiastic yachtsman and a keen athlete with a well-equipped gymnasium in his home. In 1905, however, he broke his knee and became bedridden. Aged 86 he died on 25 May 1910 in South Brisbane.



George Reinhard Francksen, born 1837 in Hollwarden, arrived in Australia on the *Fanny Kirchner*, aged 2. His parents Mund Wilhelm and Auguste left the small village close to the North Sea probably for economic reasons. Francksen arrived in Moreton Bay during May 1858. Young on age, just 20, he met the well established Heussler and together they started the Heussler & Francksen, Wine, Spirit and General Merchants & Agents in July 1858. Heussler remained the well known and connected businessman while Francksen was practically unknown. In 1859 they moved their business from Victoria Wharf to the heart of Brisbane's commercial district in Queen Street where the business remained for 25 years. Four years later, they traded as Heussler & Francksen, merchants, agents, exporters & importers. Their core business was providing services to emigrants and their agency looked after approx. 500 compatriots to facilitate them with entry to the Queensland workforce. Fluent in both languages, they were the district's leading agent for German emigrants for Queensland and not just Moreton Bay anymore. Francksen became the second German "Consul at Brisbane for the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg" representing Oldenburg from 30 August 1860 aged just 24 and remained Consul until 1863. The status of being a Consul had immediate impact on his immigration business.

Francksen's claim to fame is that he purchased one of the two portions that ended up making up the land on which the Government House stands together with Johan Christian Heussler. When Francksen died "*intestate, unmarried, without issue and without any relatives resident in the Colony*", aged just 26 years, on 19 Feb 1863"¹⁰ in his residence in Queen Street, his block of land passed on to Heussler.

Appel, Francksen and the Consuls that followed were there to help German immigrants when they first arrived in Brisbane, if required. They were giving assistance on legal disagreement that occasionally occurred between immigrants and the shipping company that brought them here. The conditions on the German

⁷ Pixley (1973), p. 11. Appel's Exequatur dated from 2 September 1856.

⁸ Note this figure was approx. 1% in New South Wales at that time.

⁹ Marie Jane Hausmann was the first female European child born at Zion's Hill.

¹⁰ *The Queenslander* 25 Apr 1868 (Q. BDM Ref. 1863/1066).

immigrant ships, however, were not good in the early years. A trip took four months and the limited medical support meant a death rate of approx. 3%.



Daniel ('Dan') Wienholt, born 25 October 1822 in Bayonne, France, was an East Indian Merchant representing Hannover until the state got annexed by Prussia with responsibility for Moreton Bay and Ipswich. He was one of four sons of a wealthy London merchant and arrived in 1854 in Australia. The Wienholt family established one of the most powerful pastoral dynasties in Queensland. Merchant Daniel Wienholt had his business in Ipswich and became "Hanoverian Consul" in Brisbane and Ipswich in June 1864, but was acting in this role only until he died on 28 February 1865 aged 42. He was described as *"an honorable men of business and a Christian gentleman"* in the Darling Down Gazette and General Advertiser. He is buried in Milton and has been the Germany Honorary Consul who was in this role for the shortest time.



Bernhard Gerhard Julius Brabant was born on 7 August 1825 in Neuenkirchen as one of four children in a well-off family. However, due to family conflicts he left his family when he was 16 and started as a sailor in Papenburg. He followed the gold rush to America and was in Philadelphia, Mobile (Alabama), New Orleans and Veracruz, Mexico. In New Orleans he earned money on steamboats cruising the Mississippi to afford a four months trip on a wagon to the Rocky Mountains before following fellow travellers on a 1,000 km walk to California chasing the gold rush. Though he made some money, it was not what he expected and it looks like he travelled from California to Australia chasing the gold rush here. However, unlike in America, in Australia he was no longer a digger, but became a merchant. He arrived in Brisbane aged 25 in 1850 where he developed a successful wool and tobacco import-export firm. In 1857, he returned to Bremen where he was a manager in an aluminum and magnesium plant. On 2 August 1864, he became Consul for the Hanseatic Republic of Bremen for Australian Affairs for Queensland in Brisbane¹¹, a fast growing city of at that stage 80,000 inhabitants with approx. 10,000 emigrants annually and increasing appetite for imports. Brabant met the Governor George Ferguson Bowen, who understood German, and asked for a Bremen-based coordination of the demanding requirements for English and German emigrants.¹² In particular, he was eager to secure that every emigrant who was administered from Bremen got 18 acres of land. Many emigrants used this right to pay for the trip. The Senate of Bremen clearly endorsed the increasingly attractive trade relationship with Queensland from 1865. Brabant convinced the Queensland Government to trust Bremen's experiences in dealing with the emigration to America and also proposed 'a better class' of emigrants than those who came from Hamburg. However, the increasing demand from English emigrants, a drought and

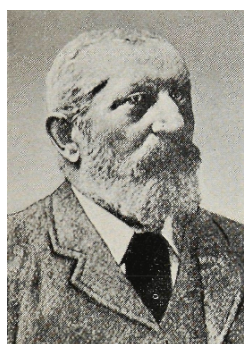
¹¹ Though he was only officially recognised in London on 18 July 1865.

¹² Ships left Hamburg for Brisbane since 1851 and transported approx. 2,000 people annually.

increasing reports of poor conditions brought this momentum to a hold. As a consequence, and despite Brabant's efforts, only six ships with a total of 27 emigrants arrived from Bremen in Brisbane during his time as a Consul and the Bremen-based emigration business moved to focus largely on America. In 1866, he was (unsuccessfully) aiming for a German colony in New Guinea. Brabant was the Consul for Bremen until 18 June 1868 when the stagnating economies in Queensland and Bremen made business difficult. He moved back to Bremen in 1866 and was active in a variety of industries. The Brabantstrasse in Bremen-Walle is named after him. Brabant passed away in Bremen on 7 February 1912 and as his only son died when he was 16¹³, he transferred his assets into a foundation.

German Honorary Consuls (1871-1914)

In 1879, the Consulate-General in Sydney was opened on command of Otto von Bismarck. Richard Krauel was appointed the first professional full-time diplomat to represent Germany in Australia at the Consulate-General in Sydney.¹⁴



Before Krauel, however, **Armand Theodore Ranniger** became the very first Honorary Consul for Germany in Brisbane in 1872. Previously Ranniger had been representing the Kingdom of Prussia and Duchy of Oldenburg as an Honorary Consul from 1864 until 1870, when the North-German Confederation was established. Ranniger was born 1835 in Altenburg, into a wealthy family that made its fortune from Germany's biggest glove factory founded by his father. He became principal Consular Agent in 1870 and on 5 January 1872 was appointed Consul for the Imperial German Empire following Germany's reunification lead by Otto von Bismarck. In 1870, Ranniger led a group of Germans to form an association to care for returned soldiers of the Franco-Prussian War and relatives of dead soldiers. When Ranniger went on leave in 1874, **Siegmund Berens** became Acting Consul. Ranniger served as a Consul for 10 years and died on 16 December 1919 in Brisbane. He is buried at Toowong Cemetery.



Johann Christian Heussler followed Ranniger as the Honorary German Consul for Germany in Brisbane in 1880 and remained Consul for 20 years. Born in Bockenheim in 1820, he started as a wine merchant in Frankfurt before working in the Netherlands in a mercantile firm.¹⁵ Heussler arrived in Melbourne in 1852 and moved to Brisbane in 1854 for health reasons. As a successful businessman, he was trading goods between the countries, while also establishing himself as a personality in local Queensland life, for example, as a member of the Legislative

¹³ His twins both died at birth in 1864 in Brisbane.

¹⁴ Carl Ludwig Sahl, senior partner of the mercantile firm Rabone, Feez and Compay was the first Consul of the German Empire when he received his acceptance by the British authorities on 18 October 1872. Sahl acted from 1879 under the Consuls-General Richard Krauel, Gustav Trevers and Alfred Pellram. Sahl also served as a President of the German Club in Sydney.

¹⁵ The book 'A Colonial Father' by Robert C Heussler provides a very comprehensive overview about Heussler's life. In particular, chapter 28 'Consul for the Fatherland' is relevant in the context of this booklet.

Council and as a founding member of the Queensland Club in 1859. Heussler was appointed Immigrant Agent for the Queensland Government in 1865 and during most of his career he supported German immigrants in the process of relocating to Australia by selling and allocating them land.



Heussler is credited with recruiting eight to ten thousand German emigrants who settled in Queensland leaving Germany on boats from Bremen and Hamburg. By 1871, there were around 6,000 Germans in Queensland constituting about 6% of the population. In the 1891 census there were 15,000 German-born settlers and thousands more of German descent who learned the language in homes, churches and primary schools. A conservative figure was estimated to be 25,000,

Like many of the Consuls before him, he was a German-born merchant who could look back on 25 years in Brisbane's commercial activity by the time he became Consul. He was no novice to the Consular Corps as he has been the Honorary Consul for The Netherlands for 18 years by the time he also became the German Honorary Consul. Heussler was endorsed by a supporting document personally signed by Emperor Wilhelm I on 10 November 1879 and appointed on 30 June 1880 as Honorary Consul for the German Empire. With 60 years of age, he remains the oldest German Consul on the day of his appointment. Heussler's Consulate office (picture¹⁶ to the right with a visible German flag) was on the top floor of the Parbury Lamb building in Eagle Street.



It is worthwhile to note that Heussler was an honored guest at many social events of the German Club, which started operating on 27 May 1883, primarily as a gymnastics club. On the evening of the 16 February 1889, a fire destroyed the clubhouse in Manning Street. Encouraged by the determination of the German Club members and his own sense of duties, Heussler sold what is now the site of the German Club (Vulture Street), 3.4 acres, for 850 Pounds to the Deutsche Turn-Verein. Nearly exact one year after the fire, Heussler was a guest of honour at the opening ceremony on 24 February 1890.

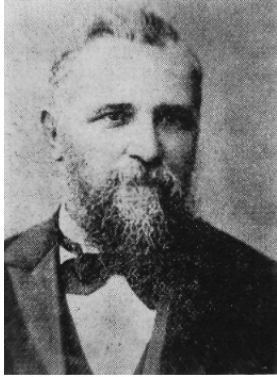
In 1862 Johann Heussler purchased 22 acres of land from the government and contracted architect Benjamin Backhouse to construct a house from stone excavated onsite combined with cement and lime mixture. Heussler and his family lived in Fernberg (German: 'distant mountain') between 1865-1872 when the high costs of upkeep forced the foreclosure on the property by the mortgagee. The Heussler family moved to a new home in George Street. His lifelong legacy was created when the Government bought Fernberg for 10,000 pounds in 1911. It is the Governor's official residence since then and one of the rooms was named after the refurbishment in 1982 the



¹⁶ R.C. Heussler (2001), p. 191. Picture from John Oxley Library neg no. 168522.

Heussler Room. Heussler Terrace in Milton is also named after him, while John Street and Heussler Street in Albion fell victim to anti-German sentiment in World War I. Heussler ended his Consul role when he went to Germany to become a trade commissioner for Queensland in Frankfurt. He died on 26 October 1907 in Albion.

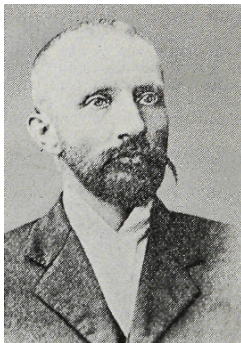
When Heussler went for a longer period to Germany for most of 1885 and part of



1886, he delegated his consular duties to lawyer and bank accountant **Heinrich Ludwig Eduard Ruethning**. Ruethning had been in Australia for 18 years as a farmer and miner, and had seen a fair amount of the country. He was a Chief Accountant at the Bank of Queensland and completed his law studies while working for the firm Little and Browne. Ruethning started to practice in Toowoomba, and eventually established his own firm, which still exists today in Brisbane. Ruethning helped in the settlement of German immigrants and was responsible for influencing shipping firms to improve conditions on ships after an incident in 1872 in

which many died. He also influenced the German Federal Parliament to pass laws forcing shipping companies to meet appropriate standards. When Ruethning completed his term of office, his efforts on behalf of German immigrants were recognized by Chancellor Bismarck. He was also one of the founding members of the Deutsche Turn-Verein, helped with the financial affairs of the Club and those of the Lutheran Church.

Heussler was succeeded by Major **Friedrich Wilhelm von Ploennies** (born



20 June 1860 in Darmstadt) who took over on 6 October 1900 after being Heussler's secretary and having held the consular position on interim before between 1897 and 1899. Von Ploennies started his career in mining and remained German Consul until 1906. The Consul's Office was located in the Commercial Union Chambers, 173 Eagle Street. Unlike Heussler, who felt it was better to leave the matter alone, von Ploennies believed that New Guinea had the potential to become an economic success for an Australian-German land settlement company. During 1902, he was appointed to a

'German-Australian Colonisation Company for German New Guinea'. When in September 1902, he set off for Europe he placed all consular business temporarily back into the hands of Heussler, then 82 of age. Von Ploennies remained focused on the idea of a 'German New Guinea', but died during one of his trips on the Bismarck Archipelago (Papua New Guinea) on 9 February 1906 caused by a heart disease. Von Ploennies is buried on the old German cemetery in Rabaul. His son, Franz von Ploennies, became the Honorary Secretary of the Brisbane Goethe Bund, a society dedicated to fostering German literature and active between 1927 and 1939.



Dr. med. Eugen Hirschfeld, born 22 January 1866 in Militisch, Silesia, Prussia, took over as the Honorary German Consul in Brisbane in 1906. Hirschfeld attended school in Breslau and studied at the Universities of Breslau, Würzburg, Munich and Strassburg, where he graduated in 1889 as an M.D. for research on eye pigmentation. Dr. Hirschfeld arrived in Brisbane in July 1890, and had his residence and medical practice on Wickham Terrace. He became a Naturalised British Subject in 1883 and was a leading figure in the German community. In 1894 he became the inaugural President of the Deutsche Vereinigung (German Union), a society for the propagation of German language and culture founded in consultation with Governor William MacGregor. In 1900, his German nationality was maintained by an entry on the German Consulate register. It was permissible under British (and thus Australian) law to maintain alien nationality and to be a Naturalised British Subject. The Office of the German Consul was moved in 1909 to the London Bank Chambers, 62-64 Creek Street, corner of Queen Street.



Deeply involved in the medical and scientific world of Brisbane, he became the first Honorary Bacteriologist at the Brisbane Hospital, and, influenced by the work of Robert Koch, had a specialized interest in tuberculosis. He later was appointed as Honorary Physician at that Hospital, the first such appointment for a German in Australia.¹⁷ His medical expertise and recognition in the British-Australian community led to his appointment as one of the founding Senators of the University of Queensland in 1910.

Hirschfeld was appointed as a Member in the Queensland Legislative Council, but held the position for four months only, due to the effects of the First World War. He held the role of German Consul until the war began in August 1914, when the position of Consul was automatically terminated.¹⁸ Hirschfeld continued to love and practise medicine in Brisbane through 1915, but was interned in February 1916 in Enoggera, and one week later was transported to the Holdsworthy internment camp¹⁹ (near Liverpool) in New South Wales. He was one of thousands of persons of German origin who were interned in Australia during and after the war. Hirschfeld was temporarily released on two brief periods of parole in August/September 1917 and November 1919.

Even though the war had ended in November 1918, Hirschfeld was interned until January 1920, and was then deported from Australia later that year. He initially lived in Germany, but spent most of his years of exile in the United States. Largely due to the involvement of Sir John Monash, Hirschfeld was finally allowed to return to Australia in 1927, where he resumed his life with his family, and his medical practice in Brisbane. He also purchased land in the Inglewood-Yelarbon

¹⁷ Overlack (1983), p. 10.

¹⁸ From 1886-1914 there was also a German Vice-Consul posted in the busy gold port of Cooktown (North Queensland), Surgeon **Dr. med. Axel Helmuth Friedrich Bernhard Helmut Kortum** (born 1 September 1845 in Waren Mueritz, died 1918). Kortum joined the Queensland Naval Brigade in August 1891. As Kortum served in total for 28 years, he has been the longest serving Consul so far.

¹⁹ See for more on the camp which held between 4,000-5,000 internees at <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/enemyathome/holsworthy-internment-camp/index.html>. Many of these internees were deported to Germany after the war.

area, and carried out agricultural research, along with his son Rudolf Hirschfeld, into pasture improvement. Eugen Hirschfeld died on 18 June 1946, at the Yelarbon property. Hirschfeld's sons Otto and Konrad followed their father in medical careers. Otto later became Chancellor of the University of Queensland. The Otto Hirschfeld Building at UQ is named after him, and the Marks-Hirschfeld Museum at UQ is named after Konrad. Eugen's grand-daughter Roisin Goss (née Hirschfeld) was married to Queensland Premier Wayne Goss, and wrote her PhD thesis on her grand-father's life.

German Honorary Consuls since the first world war (1931-)



It took until 30 April 1931 when, with **Josiah Beiers**, a new Honorary Consul started to represent Germany in Brisbane again.²⁰ Beiers²¹ was born on 14 March 1879 in Maryborough, Queensland as the third of eight children to Danish parents, who arrived in 1873 coming from Hamburg on the 'Reichstag'. Beiers showed early on his academic intelligence when he attended Maryborough Grammar School (now Maryborough High School). After finishing school, he started as a draughtsman at Walkers Limited Engineering and completed a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering from the Maryborough Technical College. Beiers married Florence Anne Cuttler in 1900 and they had three children. The family left Maryborough in 1907 and had their home first in Eagle Junction (later in Bowen Hills and Windsor). Beiers started to work as the Chief Engineer for the Engineering Supply Company of Australia (ESCA) located in Edward Street. He later was associated with the formation of the Queensland Machinery Company of which he was Managing Director for 15 years. In 1932, he formed Beiers and Ridgway (later Beiers & Company Pty. Ltd.)

Beiers took over the unpaid Consul role in 1931 and presumably was looking for prestige and business contacts affiliated with this position. A well-documented anecdote during his time as a Consul relates to the German dancer Else Rutkewitz (stage name Norda Mata) who, under Beiers' presidency, among others, performed for the Brisbane Goethe Bund. In financial needs, the dancer approached Beiers for help who in return approached the Brisbane German Club for support. The petition was successful and with the 25 Pounds she received, Norda Mata was able to afford her trip back to Germany. However, for Beiers it meant involvement in a court case as the German Club alleged Beiers of not following defined procedures. This was without consequences and on 4 June 1937 Beiers became an Honorary Member of the Brisbane Deutscher Turn-Verein.



Beiers was Consul until 1936 and his Danish background and education provided him with a basic understanding of German. When Beiers died on 18 April 1963 in

²⁰ Note that the first Consul-General of the Weimar Republic to Australia, Dr Hans Büsing, born in Schwerin in 1880, was appointed in November 1923. Initially posted in Melbourne, he moved the Consulate-General back to Sydney in 1928 where he served until July 1932.

²¹ Initially born as Josias Beier, his parents changed their (rather German) surname to Beiers (in 1883/4) and he changed his first name later to Josiah.

Brisbane, he was according to the Queensland Sugar Journal “one of the Australian sugar industry’s most widely known personality”. His grave can be found in Nudgee.

From 1937-1939, Brisbane was a branch of the German Consulate-General in Sydney. The Consulate in Brisbane closed again after the declaration of World War II and diplomatic relationships were severed on 5 September 1939.²² Subsequently, Switzerland acted as a protective power for Germany.

It took 21 years²³, before lawyer **Sir John Joseph Rowell** (born 15 February 1916, Toowong) got appointed in 1960 as new Honorary German Consul.²⁴



In contrast to the Consuls before him, Rowell did not have German roots, but he possessed conversational German language skills. Since his task had both the Australian and the German benefits in mind, he excelled in building up a prosperous relationship with the postwar Federal Republic of Germany. Sir John Rowell had a BA (Bachelor of Arts) from UQ and qualified as a lawyer by taking the Articled Clerks Examination (which at the time was the regular career pathway for lawyers). He also reached the rank of a Captain in the Australian Army. John Rowell was a solicitor and partner at Neil O’Sullivan & Rowell, served as an army officer (1941-42) and was a prisoner of war (1942-45) in Malaysia. He was also President of the Queensland Law Society (1964-66). During his time, the Consular office was in 289 Queen Street, Brisbane (so called Newspaper House next to the GPO). Rowell was the recipient of a Knight Bachelor in 1980 and was a leading figure in legal aid in Queensland. He was also recognized for his ‘unpaid’ community work, notably for his youth advocacy work. He was the treasurer of the Good Neighbour Council of Queensland between 1970-1977, a state-wide body with hundreds of volunteer workers providing assistance for migrants. He retired in 1986, after being in office for 26 years, which made him the longest serving Honorary German Consul in Brisbane so far. Rowell died on 5 May 1996 in Auchenflower with lung cancer.



His successor, **Christopher Featherstone**, was Queensland Manager of Munich



Reinsurance. With him the Consular office moved to 26 Wharf Street, Brisbane, where Munich Reinsurance was located. He further established connections between Germany and Australia. Featherstone was Honorary Consul for the decade 1986-1996 and a highlight during his period was the German participation at Expo ’88 in Brisbane. In 1992, Featherstone together with Ambassador Dr. Keil and Consul-General Dr.

²² Australia declared war against Germany on 3 September 1939.

²³ Note that Australia maintained diplomatic relations with the German Democratic Republic from 22 December 1972 to 1990. A detailed document on this relationship can be found in my 2019 booklet launched during at the 3rd German History Day 2019. There has never been a Consul for the German Democratic Republic in Brisbane.

²⁴ The first Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to Australia was Walther Hess (1900-1986) who started on 30 January 1952. In his role, Hess had to invest substantially in repairing Germany’s relations with Australia. The Embassy was initially based in various hotels in Sydney, before it moved to Canberra in 1955. After serving as an Ambassador to Mexico and to Morocco, Hess returned to Australia and lived to his death in St Ives, New South Wales.

Gescher attended the opening ceremony for the German immersion program at Kenmore State High School. In 1989, Munich Reinsurance moved its offices to 32/10 Eagle Street, and since then this has been the office of the Consul in Brisbane.



Erik Franz Ferdinand Finger, AO, who followed Featherstone in office between 1996 and 2002, contributed with his excellent connections to the Queensland Parliament and Government for six years until 2002. Finger, born in Boonah in 1938 as a son of an Australian Lutheran minister and a Swiss mother, was able to understand German, also because he took German for five years at St Peters School. One of the highlights of his Consul career was the visit by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl (accompanied by 15 German business leaders) in May 1997. The delegation visited Cairns and then briefly Brisbane on the way back from New Zealand. Corporate Germany at that stage had expanded its business links with Australia to take advantage of the country as a springboard into Asia. In June 1998, a first German Week initiated and managed by GABA President Jürgen Wittenberg took place in Brisbane featuring a number of events. Finger started as an engineer in the Main Roads Department in 1961 and over his career held a number of prestigious positions including being Commissioner for Main Roads from 1982-1988 and Director-General, Department of the Premier, Economic and Trade 1988-1994 reporting to Premiers Ahern and Goss. He was also the Chair, Queensland Motorways, Chair, Library Board Queensland, and Director of Thiess between 1996-2004. Finger was awarded an Order of Australia in 1995.



Detlef Sulzer was the first German citizen who got appointed in 2002 as the Honorary Consul in Brisbane in 42 years. Detlef Sulzer started his career as a civil engineer at the construction site of the world's largest Nuclear Power plant in Kent, England in 1967 and was asked in 1971 to join the Nuclear Division of Hochtief-AG, to be responsible for the structural design and later the construction of Nuclear Power stations in Germany. In 1983 Hochtief seconded Detlef to their partly owned company Thiess Contractors in Brisbane, to provide new technology and construction expertise to Thiess. Like his predecessor Finger, it was the role at Thiess that was essential for Sulzer to become an Honorary Consul. While being Executive Manager, Technology Development at Thiess, he became Adjunct Professor to QUT's School of Civil Engineering from 2002 to 2005. After his retirement from Thiess in 2009, Detlef founded Sulzer Consulting and became Chairman of Boulder Steel Ltd. from 2010 to 2012. His excellent working relationship with the Queensland Government officials and the German community in Brisbane, put him in place to represent Germany as Honorary Consul for 10 years. Together with Consul-General Günter Gruber he organised a comprehensive German Queensland Science and Technology Week in April 2006.

A year later, Sulzer founded the German-Australian Community Centre, Queensland (GACCQ) with the aim to unite the activities of the many German organisations in Southern Queensland. He remained President of the GACCQ for 13 years until he retired from this role in June 2018. Inspired in 2009 by Queensland's 150th Anniversary, Sulzer orchestrated the production of the book

"1842-2012, Queensland German Connection" which was published by Robin Kleinschmidt, Peter Ludlow and Matt Tesch, in 2012 and financed with the help of Australian and German organisations. Sulzer retired at age 70, on 3rd October 2012, from the role of the Honorary German Consul and was awarded Germany's highest Order of Merit in recognition of his outstanding services to the German-Australian relationship.

Almost 100 years after Eugen Hirschfeld, with **Prof Michael Schütz** another medical professional took office as Honorary Consul for Germany in 2012. Schütz, who is an internationally regarded orthopedic trauma surgeon came to Brisbane in 2004, and became Professor and Chair of Trauma at the Queensland University of Technology and the Princess Alexandra Hospital. A highlight during his time as a Consul was the G20 summit in Brisbane in November 2014 during which we welcomed Chancellor Angela Merkel in Brisbane. Prof Schütz founded the German language roundtable, a group of teachers, tutors and German language enthusiasts, to nurture education and learning as it relates to the German language. This group still meets every three months at the Brisbane German Club. In commemoration of Leichhardt's 200th birthday and the 170th anniversary of Leichhardt's explorations through Australia and mainly Queensland, Schütz initiated a number of projects, including the naming of a Qantas plane in honor of Leichhardt in the presence of the then President of the German Parliament, Prof Dr Norbert Lammert, and Leichhardt's great great great grandson of the same name, Ludwig. In 2016, Prof Schütz returned to Germany as the new Head of the Centre of Musculoskeletal Surgery at Charité Berlin. In 2017, he got awarded an "Honorary Doctorate of University" (honoris causa) by the Queensland University of Technology. Since August 2018, Prof Schütz is the Director of the Jamieson Trauma Institute in Brisbane. He orchestrated a partnership agreement between Berlin and Brisbane in the fields of health and medical science, which was signed by Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk and the President of the German Bundesrat and Governing Mayor of Berlin Michael Müller on 11 October 2018.



Following Michael Schütz in May 2016 as the now 12th German Honorary Consul in Brisbane (since 1871) is fellow QUT **Prof Michael Rosemann**, who works in the areas of Business Process Management, Information Systems and Digital Innovation. Rosemann has formerly been the Head of the Information Systems School at QUT and the University's Executive Director for Corporate Engagement. Prof Rosemann's academic passion translated also in his activities as Honorary Consul. He initiated the Australian-German Start-up Hub Summit (November 2017) and the David meets Goliath series (jointly with the Queensland Chapter of the German-Australian Chamber of Industry and Commerce), where start-ups 'meet' established companies on a nationwide basis. Under Rosemann, the Honorary Consul has scaled up its web presence and social media engagements. In 2016, a few months after his inauguration, Rosemann initiated Brisbane German Week²⁵, a series of events held early October, covering



²⁵ germanweek.com.au

the political, economic, educational, scientific and cultural aspects of German-Australian relations. Brisbane German Week 2018 included a concert in celebration of the Day of Germany Unity that was attended by the President of the Bundesrat, the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Mr Michael Müller. On 3 October 2019, the concert attracted approx. 340 guests making it the largest event so far. Rosemann initiated the establishment of a German Kino Club and the German Youth Choir.

Heads of Consular Services since 1960

The official representative of the office is the Honorary Consul, but its heart and engine is the Head of Consular Services. Over the last decades, the Honorary Consul has been blessed to have three empowering women in this so important position. In their role, they do not only take care of the day-to-day 'business' of the Honorary Consul, but also deal with a variety of representatives from within our community, and their unique requirements. This role requires detailed knowledge of complex diplomatic and consular affairs, relevant policies but most of all the ability to represent the Federal Republic of Germany appropriately to the German community here in Brisbane.



Mrs. **Elsa Armstrong** was the first Head of Consular Services when the Consulate re-opened under Sir John Rowell in 1960. Born in Hamburg, she moved in 1952 from Münster to Brisbane and served for 23 years at 289 Queen Street (Newspaper House). Mrs. Armstrong was one of the co-founders of Brisbane's German Language School (Deutsche Sonntagschule) and one of the first four teachers at St Peters. Mrs. Elsa Armstrong retired on 30 May 1983. She died on 19 February 2009 in Bellbowrie.



Her successor was Ms **Ursula Sterf**, who served the Honorary Consul for an impressive 27 years. She witnessed the move of the office of the Honorary Consul to 26 Wharf Street and then into the 'Gold Tower' at 10 Eagle Street, a location that has since been the home of the Honorary German Consulate. Ms Sterf was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit after 26 years of service with special emphasis on assistance given beyond her job duties. She retired on 15 March 2010. Unlike Mrs. Armstrong, who during her entire time only was working for one Consul, Ms Sterf worked with four Consuls (Rowell, Featherstone, Finger and Sulzer).



On 15 February 2010, Ms **Claudia Lüttringhaus** joined the Honorary Consul in Brisbane and has supported the ambitious plans of German Consuls Sulzer, Schütz and most recently Rosemann. Besides the required consular duties she Ms Lüttringhaus played an instrumental role in the establishment and effective use of contemporary social media channels as a new form of community engagement. She oversees the entire organisation of Brisbane German Week since 2016 and is one of the main organisers of traditional events such as Karneval in February of each year since 2011.

References

- H. J. Gibbney, 'Appel, George (1823–1910)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/appel-george-2894/text4149>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 7 October 2019.
- J. C. H. Gill, 'Queensland's Earliest Consular Appointment?', *Queensland Heritage*, vol 1, no 3, Nov 1965, pp 17-21.
- Jürgen Kessel, Karl-Julius Thamann: Julius Brabant (1825–1912) – Abenteurer, Geschäftsmann, Millionär. In: Bremisches Jahrbuch. Band 76. Hrsg.: Staatsarchiv Bremen zusammen mit Historische Gesellschaft Bremen, Staatsarchiv Bremen, Bremen 1997, ISSN 0341-9622, S.115–147 (online bei der Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Bremen).
- C. A. C. Leggett, 'Hirschfeld, Eugen (1866–1946)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/hirschfeld-eugen-6683/text11525>, published first in hardcopy 1983, accessed online 9 October 2019.
- Heussler, R.C.: A Colonial Father. The Story of German-born Queenslander J C Heussler. Bookhouse 2001.
- Overlack, P.: German Settlers in the Moreton Bay Region 1938-1914. Presented to a meeting of the Society, 27 October 1983.
- Pixley, N.S.: Consuls in Queensland. Part 1: The Colony. Presidential Address read at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland on 17 September 1973.
- Pixley, N.S.: Consuls in Queensland. Part 2: 1901-1950. Read at the Annual Meeting of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, 26 September 1974.
- St Paul's Lutheran Church, Nundah 1863-2013.
- The San Joaquin Historian, Vol IX, No 4, Winter 1985.
- Tesch, M., R. Kleinschmidt and P. Ludlow: Queensland German Connections. Brisbane 2012.
- Turner, P.: First European Settlement of Queensland. 1838-1988. Zion Lutheran Home. Brisbane 1987.

Impressum

German Honorary Consulate
32/10 Eagle Street
Brisbane Qld 4000
Australia
E brisbane@hk-diplo.de
P +61 (0)7 3221 7819