



## *With Deepest Sympathy*

**Dr Maximilian Brändle OAM**

25 July 1937 – 28 February 2019



A standard bearer for multiculturalism and civilised values Dr Maximilian Brändle OAM died from a heart condition at the end of February in Brisbane, Australia.

Max was born in Winterthur, Switzerland, settling in Brisbane in 1961. He became an Associate Professor at The University of Queensland and on retirement he joined Griffith University as an adjunct a/professor. He served for six years as president or secretary of the Swiss Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Queensland Chapter. In 1965, he founded the *Swiss News* (which still appears in the same format today). And he was the last living member of the founding committee of the Swiss Society of Queensland.

A Swiss-born linguist who migrated to Australia to teach languages, he was described this week by the Swiss Consulate General as “respected throughout his life at both ends of the Earth”. He was “forward-looking with a great capacity to reflect on the human condition”.

Always recognised as a multi-lingual, cultured and erudite identity, Max was the second full-time Director of the Institute of Modern Languages at The Queensland University, from 1970 to 1998. He directly taught five out of 30 languages offered by the institute, and commenced the University's teaching of English to international students, and courses for teachers of English.

He was the honorary chairman of the Language Services Committee of World Expo 88 and was active in various associations promoting international education, business,

culture, community welfare and Australian/EU affairs. He was president of the Dante Alighieri Society and secretary of the Australian Goethe Society, both of Brisbane. For 32 years he represented the Swiss community in Australia in the Berne-based ‘Parliament of the Swiss Abroad’.

With these interests Max flourished as an historian with abundant subjects to choose from, focused on his adopted home city Brisbane and the State of Queensland – ending with a familiar and ready recall on the background of 140 communities.

His work included biographies on outstanding individuals, such as the second-generation Romanian-Australian Ted Theodore, a Premier of Queensland in the 1920s, or the stories of whole communities, inevitably including the Swiss in Queensland, many other communities who stayed on in numbers, or ones who did not, like the Swedes “because it was too hot and there were too many mosquitoes”, he said.

He was pleased in particular with one major book, *Multicultural Queensland : the people and communities of Queensland*, co-authored with Steve A Karas, an official publication for the 1988 Australian Bicentenary which went to four editions.

There were several publications which fed into innumerable entertaining short talks that he delivered in many settings.

In what amounted to a weighty academic contribution, both in his initial field and then the history of migration, he had books on pre-war migrants (1991) and refugees in Queensland (1992), a text on the life of “14 remarkable



migrants”, an edited collection of letters home from a Swiss identity, Henri Targent, translated from French, books on adult language learning (1993), bilingual issues and translation (in three bi-lingual Swiss towns) (1995), and languages in society (2004).

Wherever members of a community were assembled or overseas guests were being received, Dr Brändle was most likely called upon to give a sketch on the life of that community in Queensland – always an original treatment, factual and telling.

He had many connections, sometimes being billed as an “activist” for his engagement with ethnic community organisations or international agencies, for example as President of the *Migrant Welcome Association in Queensland* for eight years, and as a member of the *Australian Council for Europe (ACE)*.

In 2003 he received the Medal of the Order of Australia for distinguished commitment to the promotion of multiculturalism.

In an archive video he reflected that voluntary work on migrant services was vital through to the 1990s, until professional agencies and personnel were brought into the field, and recalled some exchanges over financial support with the long-serving Premier, of Danish ancestry, Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen.

Even more strongly, the impact of Max was in his urbane personality, which presented a match of presence and warmth, noted this week by Mrs Elfi Massey-Vallazza, President of the ACE:

“He had an enormous capacity for making people feel at ease. He was a world citizen and an example to all of us”.

While always known as “Max”, Dr Brändle said he considered the abbreviation a suitable name for a family dog, but as “Max” he made a last visit to Europe not long before his death, with some of his five adult children, re-visiting old familiar places and favourite art galleries.

The family tributes filled out the picture of a “caring and reliable father who always wanted the best for his children; it was a life “all about risks and adventure, culture and history. He was a walking, talking encyclopaedia who loved to enlighten you whenever the opportunity arose. He loved to travel and enjoy cultures and new people. When he wasn’t being brilliant he was a lovable friend. He liked chocolate and would debate the merits of the Belgian or Swiss varieties”.

A memorial service for Max was held in Brisbane on 8 March. It is where we heard of a prospective book he had been working on, a listing of 24 most favoured paintings and his relationship with them.

Said a Swiss compatriot delivering eulogies: “He was hard-headed and knowledgeable, with a multi-cultural message, to keep us all together. He was a gentle soul who entertained us with many interesting stories.”

**The committee of the Swiss Society of Queensland and Swiss club members would like to express their deepest sympathy to family and friends of Max.**

**May you Rest in Peace.**



*Max Brändle will be very much missed.*

