

The celebration of the 30-year anniversary of the North Shore Polish Saturday School in Sydney: 15 September 2018

The celebration was opened by Associate Professor Ulrike Garde, Head of the Department of International Studies: Languages and Cultures at Macquarie University, who at the outset acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land on which we were gathered and paid respects to their Elders both past and present, whilst also extending that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Assoc. Prof. Garde remarked that Macquarie University was delighted to be included in the celebration of the 30-year anniversary of the operation of the North Shore Polish Saturday School and acknowledged the school's ongoing support toward the continuation of Polish language education for the Polish-Australian Community. The celebration was held to thank all teaching staff for their commitment to the development and delivery of learning programs, to recognise the contribution of those individuals and institutions that have supported the school over the years, and to highlight the relationships between the North Shore Polish Saturday School and Macquarie University's Polish language offerings. All the teachers, students and parents, and in particular the Principal of the school, Elizabeth Cesarski, were acknowledged for their efforts and dedication, and congratulated on their many achievements over the years. Assoc. Prof. Garde wished them continued success in their professional and pedagogical endeavours.

Historically, the North Shore Polish Saturday School was first taught on-campus at Macquarie University when it started in February 1988. The Polish Studies program offered at Macquarie University was introduced 5 years earlier in 1983 as part of the new Slavonic Studies Program, a program supported directly through a funding initiative of the then Federal Coalition Government. Assoc. Prof. Garde on behalf of the Macquarie University thanked both private donors and external organizations for their financial support of the Polish Studies program over the years. She particularly thanked the Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Sydney for their annual donations towards the maintenance of the program, and the Consul General herself, Mrs Regina Jurkowska, for her active involvement with the learning and teaching of the language and culture of Poland at a tertiary level. Macquarie University also recognised the help provided by the Polish Studies Foundation, which had been a long-time supporter of the program and acknowledged its President, Mr Tom Czarnota.

The strong relationship of the Department of International Studies with international communities in Australia is strongly aligned with Macquarie University's vision and values. The Department's engagement with communities foregrounds its fundamental belief in the value of multiculturalism and the social benefits it brings, whilst also fostering the ideals of diversity, inclusiveness and respect within the Australian context. Polish Studies at Macquarie University develops the student's awareness of the richness of Polish cultural heritage and seeks to increase their potential employability by providing them with transferrable skills required across a variety of positions and professions in a changing labour market.

Assoc. Prof. Garde emphasized students' highly complimentary comments on their learning experiences studying Polish at Macquarie University with the Head of Polish Studies, Dr Kamila Walker. Students see her as a highly engaging and supportive teacher, who expertly navigates their way through the fields of Polish Language, Literature and Culture. It is such positive feedback that makes all our teaching efforts worthwhile, because it shows the sustained benefits of studying a foreign language. The Department of International Studies encourages all the North Shore Polish Saturday School students to continue their language learning in high school and later at Macquarie University.

Dr Kamila Walker, Macquarie University, Sydney.