



KASTELLORIZIAN COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE CONVENTION REPORT

JAN 30 2016

The Convention was an outstanding success and is a credit to the efforts of the Convention Steering Committee of **Dr. Anastasia Anastas, Michael Boubaris, Despo Efstathis, Stathis Efstathis (Convenor) Betty Yanardasis and George Yanardasis** and a team of 14 volunteers.

From the time the interstate delegates arrived in Brisbane where we were greeted and transported to our hotel, to the final session on Tuesday the Convention offered a range of activities and memories too numerous to mention.

However some features would have to include-

Friday night registration and drinks was an opportunity for the local and interstate delegates to see each other for the first time. The overwhelming surprise and enthusiasm shown as people saw and greeted each other was spectacular. With three local girls dressed in Kazzie costume greeting guests and the welcome address from the President of the Kastellorizian Association of Queensland Inc. **Michael Boubaris** set the stage for a happy and joyous event that went well into the night. The Greek Club, with its spacious rooms and facilities proved a most fitting venue.

Saturday saw a number of erudite speakers. The state presidents delivered an overview of the activities in their respective states to a most attentive and interested audience. This was followed by a fine presentation from **Allan Creswell** (WA) demonstrating his website on www.castellorizo.org. Allan has approximately 27,000 names in his data base and the local Kazzies were given the opportunity to contribute their family details to his collection during the Convention. Allan can be contacted on - cressie@castellorizo.org.

Michael Anastas gave an overview of the key issues confronting Kastellorizians in Australia and the need to address the future direction of Kastellorizians generally and the KCA specifically.

After a large and delicious lunch a *Q and A* forum of young people was held to consider...*why the youth are not connecting to their Kastellorizian heritage?* This panel was ably moderated by **Jake Kyranis** and included **Dr. John Bacalakis, Jack Barbouttis, Maryann Efstathis, Anna- Jane Kyranis and Anastasia Passaris, and Rebecca Mangos**. The enthusiasm shown and the ideas raised were duly noted by the audience and the Board gave an undertaking to implement these ideas and to provide a vehicle for them to contribute and participate in future KCA activities.

The evening Dinner at Il Centro restaurant was sold out with a long waiting list. **Andy and Marcia (Karlos) George** with a strong Kazzie connection made every effort to accommodate the guests and make them welcome.

Sunday morning saw the attendees in St. George's church at 8.30am for the *autocracia* conducted by **Rev. Fr. Anastasios**. This church is beautiful, well designed and smartly outfitted and following the service the delegates moved to the Greek Club for an amazing morning tea and time to chat.

The late morning presentations featured an impassioned message from **George Pizanis** (NSW) giving his experiences with the youth in NSW. In talking on “*What it means to be a Kazzie*” he strongly emphasised the need to maintain faith in the Club if we are to survive in future. This was followed by an equally impressive multi-media presentation from **Dr. George Stabelos** (Vic.) who spoke on *Future Directions of Kazzies* and included the explanation of a SWOT analysis, videos of a virtual tour of Kastellorizo, unusual photographs of the war time devastation and cartoons showing Alexander the Great’s soldier formation and the need to be strongly united to ensure success moving forward.

Another delicious lunch on the terrace of the Greek Club overlooking the skyline of the city of Brisbane was followed by a set of speakers giving their *Kazzie Experiences*. The first was delivered by **Dr. Paul Boyatzis** (WA) who gave a moving and yet entertaining account of the sinking of the *Empire Patrol* in September 29, 1945. Being a survivor, Paul’s story was most engaging and gave a fitting voice to this sad moment in our history.

Dr. Anthony Kiosoglous (QLD) reported on his experiences as a consultant and reconstructive surgeon in Brisbane. Having presented in national and international conferences he is also a proud Kastellorizian and interested in travel, sport, Byzantine Chanting and an active member of the Brisbane Greek Orthodox Community.

The final speaker for the afternoon was **Peta Mandikos- Tilse** (QLD). Peta is a financial services professional with her own ABC 612 Morning session every Monday where she gives a weekly roundup of the financial markets. In advocating for the greater protection of investors through the development of industrial guidelines she was recently appointed to the FINISIA Regional Council (QLD). A mother of three young children she has worked with NAB, Westpac, Suncorp, Dresdner Kleinwort Benson, Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, UBS and GSJBW.

The highlight of the Convention was the Dinner held on the top floor of the Greek Club and over 200 guests were treated to yet another outstanding dinner and the key note speakers of the Convention.

Emeritus Byron Kakulas AO, MD Hon. Athens, MD WA, FRACP, FRACPath, FRACPA (WA) gave his address in which he spoke of our deep gratitude to our ancestors for their strength and fortitude in coming to Australia. He went on to speak of the plight of refugees- the Kastellorizian refugees of the past and the Syrian refugees of the present. Finally he acknowledge the significant contribution that Kastellorizians have made to the development of Australia.

With a specially arranged satellite link from USA, **Mr. Andrew N. Liveris**, President, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of DOW Chemical Company gave a passionate address to an attentive and hushed audience in which he spoke of the island of Kastellorizo- known as Megisti- and the need to support the island and the nation of Greece. He is a founder of the Hellenic Initiative aimed to promote entrepreneurship and job creating investments in Greece. Andrew went on to describe the difficulties faced by his grandfather and father as settlers in the pioneer town of Darwin. As Kastellorizians we are imbued with the Kazzie spirit and despite these difficulties he was able to develop a career with DOW over four decades. Andrew highlighted the need to do business on an international scale and the importance of a world class education system. Finally he was able to take questions from the floor, including a question from his sister Maria. Once the link was completed, the DOW technicians packed their equipment and left to catch the next plane back to the USA. The evening continued with Greek dancing and more wonderful food to celebrate this outstanding event.

On Monday 25th January, the delegates boarded a bus for Bribie Island. They visited the St. Andrews Theological College Campus and Bribie Island Retreat and Recreational Centre which is a facility

developed by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia. Delegates visited the church of *Our Lady Theotokos* where **Dr. Paul Boyatzis** lead the group in a short prayer. Then we visited the cabin funded by the Kastellorizians of Queensland called Kastellorizo House. This was followed by an informative talk from **Vasiliki Boyatzis** (ACT) regarding her experiences in Kastellorizo in October and November 2015 including the impact of Syrian refugees coming from Turkey followed by yet another wonderful lunch.

On Tuesday 26th January, 2016 we were treated to a Big Kazzie Breakfast at the Rydges hotel. On this occasion the Director of the Convention **Stathis Efstathis** gave his closing remarks and presentations were made to the steering committee by the KCA as a token of their thanks and appreciation for all the stunning work that helped to make the Convention such a success.

Fittingly it was announced that the Australia Day honours list included the Director Stathis Efstathis who was made a member of the Order of Australia which was happily celebrated by all.

The winning formulae-

- High level key note speakers
- Excellent guest speakers- who are world experts
- Contributions from every state
- The youth panel - both very informative and inspiring
- Great facilities- e.g. the Greek Club, Rydges hotel
- Excellent cuisine- plenty of good food
- Well-developed social programme
- Excellent/ outstanding/ impressive Conference brochure
- Perfect timing- suited delegates of all ages
- Pack – KCA bag, pen/torch, embossed notepad, programme, sweets, tissues

Suggestions for 2018-

- Use of tags not lanyards
- Making the event tax deductible
- Arrange speakers 12 months in advance
- Circulate the brochure earlier- even if incomplete
- Set theme- suggestions noted
- List of possible speakers- names noted.

Summary- Our friends in Queensland have set the bar at a very high standard for future events. They are a team of talented, experienced and professional people who are aware of what should be done and they delivered an excellent Convention. They were organised, efficient, paid attention to detail and their welcome surpassed every expectation. An excellent effort all round. Congratulations to the team and to Stathis for his outstanding leadership.

Yvonne Panagacos

President.