



# Australia Day in Greek colours

Australia Day this year had a greek flavor. It brought together Greeks and others in a fun atmosphere at Mornington Park, on Sunday 24th January. Thousands of Greeks took part in the event on Sunday organized by the Union of Greek Elderly Associations, to celebrate Australia Day (commemorating the arrival of the first white settlers).

The preparations for the event had started long before in every detail, in order to ensure the successful outcome and to attract as many as possible, the Union coordinator Giorgos Katsourakis said.

“The fact that we chose for it to happen on Australia Day is not accidental. We considered that it is a chance to say a “thank you” to this country which accepted us and offered us so much”, stated the president of the Union Mr. Theodosios Nomikos.

Greeks have been going on excursions on Mornington shore for ...100 years now. At the beginning of last century it was an opportunity to see each other, to have fun but also put on their best clothes. The ladies with the hats and long dresses, the men with their suits and hats, and the children also with their party clothes.

“One time I remember we had 56 buses”, says the former president of the organization, Peter Gialouris, noting: “The elderly excursion always took place on the second Thursday of January, before the Community events took place. We always had great success. The Australians couldn’t believe their eyes. During the first years journalists would come and ask me what we were celebrating. They considered it unbelievable that excursions could happen with so many elderly people. The big surprise would come when all would join the dance, having fun and enjoying themselves like they were young children.”

“This year we are not enjoying ourselves alone”, the current president, Theodosios Nomikos says and adds: “We thought of inviting all the community, young and old, in addition to people from all nationalities to have a good time together. Immigrants, old or new, we all have the same life experiences. We came to this country without provisions, with the same dreams and the same expectations. Australia gave us opportunities we would never have had in our country. What better

opportunity than this to show our appreciation all together. The most important thing is that all generations are invited to participate. The elderly can bring their children and grandchildren to this happening. This is the idea we promoted and, as it seems, it found fertile ground, as many have stated that they are coming with their families.”

“It was a wonderful idea”, expat Angeliki Birbili says. She is enthusiastic about the fact that Australia Day was celebrated there, saying: “We have lived, almost all our lives, in this country. We worked hard, but we were rewarded for our efforts. We had a family, had the opportunity to send our children to school, to university. We started from nothing; With a suitcase, and in most cases... not a full one. We are a part of this country. We, the immigrants, made Australia what it is today. We contributed with our labour and our ideas towards her development. Such a national holiday, is also about us”.

“The enthusiasm was so apparent this year because of the new form that this annual excursion of the Union is taking”, says Mr Giorgos Katsourakis, also mentioning: “the idea of everyone participating, Greeks of all ages, Australians, immigrants from all over the world living in this country, is of great importance and has motivated interest in the highest degree.”

The band Leventopetha entertained the nearly 3,000 people who attended. Both the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby and the Opposition Leader, Ted Baillieu were in attendance. Speakers, including Bill Papastergiadis, president of the Greek Community of Melbourne & Victoria, emphasized the contribution of 4 generations of Australian-Greeks to the multi-cultural heritage of Australia.

As well as the mandatory Greek folk dancing, Aboriginal dancers entertained the crowd. Mornington Park is one of the most picturesque parts of Melbourne as the images below reveal:

There was lots of dancing at one of the most picturesque parts of Melbourne... and some funny people entertained the crowd... even the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby, and the Opposition Leader, Ted Baillieu, were there... and, everyone had a great time...



...even the Premier of Victoria, John Brumby



Opposition Leader, Ted Baillieu

