

CHRISTOPHER DELIGIANNIS: The Greek community's ... "new Ambassador" in Canberra!

"Ο Kosmos" had the following interview with Christopher Deligiannis:

Kosmos: "Christopher, for starters, congratulations for this great experience of yours! Could you tell our "Kosmos" readers what was the selection process that commenced your... taste in politics?"

Christopher: "Thank you! I'll explain by saying that each individual state and territory government sent an application to all of the schools under their jurisdiction with the instructions for each school to choose one student to submit a one page report on the topic 'Aborigines under the constitution'. After presenting the report, I was incited, along with roughly 120 other representatives, from schools throughout NSW, to a preliminary convention held at the NSW State Parliament late last year. After a brief introduction session, we were divided into groups and given stimulus material to discuss. The issues we were to decide upon related to including mention of the Aboriginal people in the preamble of the constitution as well as discussing whether or not the government should reserve the right to make laws related to specific ethnic groups within the Australian community."

Kosmos: "So, how exactly was the process and what were your actual responsibilities?"

Christopher: "While in my group, I was elected by my peers to be chairperson. Essentially my position involved running the debate within the



group as well as mediating disputes that arose over certain contentious issues. After deciding that the Aboriginal community did deserve recognition in the constitution, and that the government should not maintain the power to legislate on specific minorities, the respective groups all came together in the Lower House of State Parliament to confer our results. After I gave a speech explaining our group's stance, we had an election process to determine which of the delegates present would travel to Canberra to represent the state. Out of the 120 representatives, about 25 were selected of which I was one of them."

Kosmos: "What happened on the first day of this meeting?"

Christopher: "On Tuesday



23rd of March 2010 I met with the other delegates from Sydney at Central Station, where we met with two conveners of the convention and boarded a coach for Canberra. Upon arrival in Canberra we met with

the rest of the delegates from throughout Australia, roughly 120 Year 12 students from each state and territory in the nation. We were treated to guided tours of the National Archives, the Museum of Australian Democracy as well as Parliament House before settling in for the night at the Rex Hotel, the entire trip funded by the Federal government's Department of Education."

Kosmos: "The second day, we understand was exciting! What took place then?"

Christopher: "Wednesday 24th of March saw the bulk of the convention completed. We met in Old Parliament House where we were greeted by Professor John Williams,

professor of law at the University of Adelaide whose area of expertise was in Australian Constitutional Law. The purpose of the convention, we were instructed, was to analyse the 'division of powers' in the Australian federal system of government. Specifically we were to listen to arguments for and against the nationalisation of the areas of Health and Water and to determine whether or not we believed that the Commonwealth should maintain control of these two vital areas to Australia. We heard the case for by Senator Kate Lundy of the ACT, who was subsequently refuted by Senator Cory Bernadi of South Australia. That night we were treated to an exclusive dinner at the High Court of Australia and were allowed to explore the single most important legal institution in Australia at our own discretion."

Kosmos: "Sounds so exciting so far! What happened the last day, Thursday 25th of

March, which coincidentally, as you know for us Hellenes is "Greek National Day"?"

Christopher: "The following day, on the 25th March, saw the conclusion of the convention. We met as a whole group in order to draft a communique to be submitted to the Australian Prime Minister regarding the results of the convention. However, before this, we engaged in a vote amongst ourselves to simulate a nationwide referendum."

Kosmos: "Why was this and what was its significance?"

Christopher: "The results of this vote were significant, we elected to have Water under the Commonwealth's discretion in order to effectively deal with the inter-state conflict over the Murray-Darling river, however, as expected, the State's refused to nationalise health, fearing NSW's lagging system would bring them down as well. After this vote, and after writing the communique, it was presented to Senator the Hon. John Hogg, President of the Senate, who then submitted our results and notes to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd himself."

Kosmos: "Kosmos" hears that there were a number of Greeks who attended this convention. Do you have some data on this to share with us?"

Christopher: "Yes, I do and here they are. There were

2 delegates from NSW that were Greek

In total there were 7 Greek delegates out of the 120 and the break up was

- 2 from NSW
- 3 from Victoria
- 1 from ACT
- 1 from WA.

However primarily the majority of students were Anglo students. 75% were girls and 25% boys while 75% were from Public schools and the remainder 25% were from private schools"

Kosmos: "Once again, congratulations Christopher for your experience and thank you for sharing this with our "Kosmos" readers! You have made your family, school and the wider Greek community proud! Best of luck in your HSC exams at the end of this year!"

Christopher: "Thank you for your interest and to Kosmos Greek newspaper!"

Dimitrios Kametopoulos

