

Assyrian Genocide Monument Unveiled in Sydney

It was a historic day for the Australian Assyrian community as over 2000 people assembled for the unveiling of the world's first monument to the victims of the Assyrian Genocide to be erected in a public space. In a proud display of solidarity, the Australian Hellenic and Australian Armenian communities were both well-represented, joining members of Federal, state and local politics on an occasion of remembrance and celebration.



The Assyrian Genocide Monument at Bonnyrigg in Sydney's south-western suburbs is an initiative of the Assyrian Universal Alliance – Australian Chapter, with Mr Hermiz Shahan as Secretary. It is dedicated to the victims of the Assyrian genocide (SEYFO) during and after World War One 1914-1918, committed by the Ottoman Turkish Empire as well as the victims of the 1933 Simele massacre in Iraq and all Assyrian martyrs since then.

One of the most powerful addresses of the day was delivered by the Hon. Amanda Fazio MLC, President of the Legislative Council of the Parliament of NSW. Focussing on efforts by opponents of the

Monument, Ms Fazio stated that “in the way Jewish Holocaust deniers are reviled, so should deniers of the Assyrian, Armenian and Greek Genocides be reviled”.

The theme of the shared suffering of the Assyrian, Armenian and Hellenic peoples was echoed by all the speakers, both during the ceremony and during the seminar that followed. Messages of support were also delivered by His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, Metropolitan of the Assyrian Church of the East Australia and New Zealand, Mr Nick Lalich (Member for Cabramatta and Mayor of the City of Fairfield), Senator Concetta Fierravanti-Wells (Liberal Senator for New South Wales), the Hon. Ninos Khoshaba (Member for Smithfield), Mr Victor Dominello (Member for Ryde), and Rev. the Hon. Fred Nile MLC.

On behalf of the Australian Hellenic Council (NSW), Dr Panayiotis Diamadis (Secre-

tary) spoke about the common desire of the Australian Assyrian, Australian Hellenic and Australian Armenian communities for recognition of their common experience of genocide in the 20th century.

“It was supremely appropriate for the indigenous people of Australia to welcome the indigenous people of Bet-Nahrain (Mesopotamia) in commemorating a common experience: genocide”.

Dr Diamadis also referred extensively to the demand of the Australian Hellenic Council, the Armenian National and the Assyrian Universal Alliance for recognition of the Assyrian, Armenian and Hellenic

Genocides by the Federal and regional parliaments of the Commonwealth. The Programme included a joint statement of the three public affairs bodies on the Genocide Recognition issue.

The Australian Hellenic community representation was very noticeable, with a number

of Hellenic national flags and young members of the “Argonauts” Association dressed in traditional Pontian costume. The Australian Hellenic Council Coordinator, Mr George Vellis, committee member Petros Kalligas and the leader of the Friends of the AHC, Mr Lambros Papadopoulos, were in attendance with a number of committee members. Also the Pan-Pontian Brotherhood “Pontoxeniteas” President, Mr Dimitrios Kouklides and committee, as well as a large delegation from the Pontian Folkloric and Cultural Association “Argonauts”.

The historic event also attracted representation from Melbourne, with the Return To Anatolia organisation Chairperson Mrs Sofia Kotanides being joined by committee member Helen Pappaioannou. Mr Tsimbidis from the Pontian Federation of Melbourne was also present.

The monument unveiling was the latest expression of solidarity by the Australian

Hellenic community to the Australian Assyrian community. Thousands of Assyrians found safe haven in Hellas and Cyprus during the Genocide of 1914-1924. Thousands more fled persecution in Republican Turkey and Iraq, before joining relatives in Australia. It is part of a relationship that stretches back millennia.

“It was a historic day during which the eternal flame within was reignited,” stated AHC NSW Coordinator George Vellis. “In order to allow us to move forward and put the millions of souls to rest, we call upon the governments of the world to recognise the genocides of the three peoples. Lest we forget”.

With this joint presence at the monument unveiling, the Australian Assyrian, Australian Hellenic and Australian Armenian communities declared in no uncertain terms their desire for recognition of their common experience of genocide by the political representatives of their adopted homeland.



BREAKFAST ON THE BRIDGE RETURNS TO SYDNEY

Premier Kristina Keneally and Minister for Major Events Kevin Greene today announced that the world's greatest picnic, Breakfast on the Bridge, will take place on Sunday, October 10 and will be football themed. The event will see the Sydney Harbour Bridge transformed into a giant park and covered in grass from pylon to pylon – with more than 6,000 people gathering on the bridge for a picnic breakfast. Breakfast on the Bridge is the centrepiece of the Crave Sydney International Food Festival, which offers 31 days of food experiences throughout Sydney in October. This year the event will also feature a football theme to support the Australian 2022 FIFA World Cup bid. There will be almost 6,000 free Breakfast on the Bridge tickets available for NSW residents via a public ballot to open next Sunday, August 15. People who register in the ballot will be able to nominate four other friends or family members to join them on the big day.

“Breakfast on the Bridge will provide a great opportunity for Sydneysiders and people from all over NSW to get out with their families, bring a BYO picnic breakfast and see a different side to

one of our city's most popular landmarks,” Ms Keneally said. “I urge everyone in NSW to register for the public ballot and make the most of this chance to spend a Sunday morning eating breakfast on a grass covered Sydney Harbour Bridge.”

Following Breakfast on the Bridge, the grass will be re-used by Sydney schools and parks.

“Last year, the inaugural Breakfast on the Bridge captured national and international headlines, with images of the event seen by more than 100 million people across key tourism markets including Japan and the United States,” Mr Greene said.

“To build on this success, the 2010 event will offer a limited number of tourism packages for interstate and international tourists to purchase.”

The Crave Sydney International Food Festival is also one of the five anchor events on the NSW Master Events Calendar and will add a considerable boost to NSW tourism for the month of October. The Sunday Telegraph is the media partner for the event and details of the public ballot will be provided in the paper on Sunday, 15 August.

Bonus pay scheme flawed

The Gillard government has today announced a bonus pay scheme for teachers for 10% of teachers from 2014. Under the scheme teacher will be set against teacher annually to compete for one-off bonus payments equal to 10% of their salary.

President of the NSW Teachers Federation, Bob Lipscombe said: “Rather than develop a comprehensive plan to further lift student performance and improve equity in Australian education by implementing professional pay for all accomplished teachers, Ms Gillard has announced a scheme which is little more than a gimmick. Not only is the proposal very similar to schemes which have operated and failed in the US, but the Gillard Government will have to be elected twice before any teacher sees a dollar of extra pay. A similar controversial scheme, using very similar and equally flawed criteria to assess teachers in Washington DC, has recently resulted in nearly 1000 teachers (representing 25% of Washington's teachers) either being dismissed or put on one year's notice. Like the proposed Australian scheme, the Washington scheme misuses NAPLAN-type student data to assess teacher performance. Ms Gillard's proposal also closely reflects one proposed by the Howard government and rejected by the Labor party when in Opposition.

If the Gillard Government manages to survive both the 2010 and 2013 Federal elections and introduce this scheme, it will contribute nothing of value to improving education.”