

of leaving loved ones and a place where everything is familiar – the language, the community, the landscape, the rituals, and the traditions. For Greek immigrants, the loss of country and all that is familiar is associated with strong feelings of loss. Separation from loved ones exacerbates these feelings. These feelings are reflected in the stories told by the participants of this project.

However, an equally strong theme that was very strong in these stories is that of resilience, hope and desire for a better future. In telling their stories, these Greek immigrants felt validated and their sacrifices and losses were acknowledged. The telling and writing of their stories also gave them the opportunity to look back on their migration experience and affirm their successes. For many the success has been in ensuring a better future for their children. Even more significantly, as a community there is a sense of achievement and pride in that as Greek immigrants they have been successful in transmitting the language, culture, traditions and religion to the next generations i.e. they have retained and transmitted their Greek identity.

The stories of this project were the basis of conference papers which were presented by the Greek Welfare Centre at three conferences this year. They were presented at the:

- Ageing in a Foreign Land Conference at Flinders University, Adelaide
- Greek Welfare Centres National Conference in Cairns

More recently the paper was also presented at the Oral History of Australia Conference held in Sydney. This Conference featured over 100 speakers including many international experts. The theme was "Moving memories: Oral History in a Global World."

Oral history "is a form of human communication" which involves "gathering and preserving the voices and memories of people and communities." Its value is that it tells the story in an individual's own words and allows the expression of thoughts and feelings as well as their personal experience. Photos, poems, songs and objects may be used to assist the memories and they were included in the Project.

The conference participants were very interested in the stories of Greek immigrants as many of them had some experience or relationships with Greek people. The stories were very moving and again were an affirmation of the success of Greek immigrants.

Photos: Yiannis Dramitinos

