



# The Diversity of Sydney's current Greek Shops

by Vasilis Vasilas

With excitement I accepted Kosmos' editor Yannis Dramitinos' invitation to contribute to this year's Kosmos Supplement, as it was a fantastic opportunity to pay tribute to Sydney's Current Greek Shops. The following twenty abridged personal narratives included here are all in my latest publication, "Beyond the Shop Windows and Counters: Stories and Photographs of Sydney's Current Greek Shops."

The inspiration to compile a publication of personal narratives on Sydney's current Greek shops came from the Sydney Morning Herald's interactive online feature, 'The Old Shops of Sydney' (2014), which featured a wide variety of shops whether they were a butcher, delicatessen or pastry shop. Observing this selection of old shops made me realise that the post WW2 Greek migrants ventured into all these different types of shops; they were butchers, pastry cooks and tailors. While Greek migrants have been closely associated with a variety of food shops such as cafes, milk bars, fish and chips, charcoal chicken and takeaway shops, and they have played a significant role in catering Australian tastes, it is important to provide a broader portrayal of the Greek migrants' contribution to business and marketplace as a result of the diversity of Greek-owned shops.

With the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Greek migrants to Australia in the 1950s, 60s and 70s, this has an enormous impact on the variety of Greek businesses. An important shift is that in the pre-WW2 period Greek businesses mostly catered for its Australian customers' needs, but with the growth of Greek communities in cities such as Sydney and Melbourne, as well as other urban centres, Greek migrants realised the importance of the growing Greek market itself. As a result, the Greek migrants found the opportunities to establish businesses

that could cater for the needs of Greek communities.

The Greek migrants to Sydney mostly gravitated to suburbs close to their workplace. In the 1950s, there were so many factories, shops and workshops in inner city suburbs. While this publication places much emphasis on Sydney's Greek businesses, attention is drawn to the thousands of Greek migrants - factory workers who preferred Greek shops to cater for their needs. With these Greek-owned shops, there was no language as they could communicate with these shop-keepers who also understood their needs for Greek products and services. As a result, it is Sydney's continually growing Greek community population, after the mid-1950s, that leads towards the Greek-run shop developing a distinct Greek identity. While the Greek-run cafes provided Greek migrants with great opportunities to enter business and gain financial independence, they were mostly catering for local Australian tastes. When this new, large wave of Greek migrants settled in cities such as Sydney and, to a lesser extent, Newcastle and Wollongong, there developed the need to cater for their growing community's requirements.

"Beyond the Shop Counters and Windows: Stories and Photographs of Sydney's Current Greek Shops" tries to capture the diversity of the Greek-owned shops across Sydney; this selection of abridged versions of the personal narratives in this Kosmos Supplement reinforces the idea that these contributed to the development of the Greek and broader Australian communities. More importantly, they continue to do so... And this is a tribute to their service to our community...

These abridged versions of the personal narratives in Vasilis' book are from the Facebook page, Synesmos, Connecting People and their Stories, which promotes Vasilis work on personal narratives.

All photographs courtesy of Vasilis Vasilas, unless stated otherwise.

Captions: Left: Vasilis with Athanasios Gerakas of Speedy Shoe Repairs, Ashfield. Athanasios took over the shop in 1976. His son, Dimitris, has run the shop since the mid 1990s; Athanasios still goes to the shop every day and works until midday. Middle: Vasilis with Stavros Kulumundris of Steve and Angela's Unisex Hairdressing Salon in Belmore. Stavros and Angela have been running their Salon since 1986. Right: Vasilis with Evi Mitchell of C' Aphrodite in Cremorne. Evi Mitchell has been running the shop since 2000; she has recently sold half the business.