

2012 ANTIPODES GLENDI MELBOURNE GREEK FESTIVAL

Beneath the gleaming concrete and glass towers and overshadowed by the shade of the eucalyptus trees that lined the North end of Lonsdale Street in Melbourne stood a myriad of coloured canopies. A blue and heavenly sky hung lightly overhead like an umbrella, while a beaming sun threw darts of sunlight down on the crowds that mingled freely in and between the tents, games, entertainment and stalls that had congregated together in a huddle.

This was the long awaited Glendi, the Hellenic Antipodes of Australia. A time when all competitive differences of a Hellenic nature are put aside to demonstrate to the wider Australia community the contribution made to Australia by those of a Hellenic heritage. It is a time of gaiety, joys and laughter, where people from all walks of life, nationalities, cultural differences could be seen to pass through the loom of the Australian society and to view the strengths and diversity of the diverse fabrics that make up the Australian society.

If one is to describe the visitors to the 2012 Antipodes Glendi, one has to look at the diversity of the people. Take for example the word Multiculturalism is and what does it mean to average bloke in the street. It is but a word that is often misused and for negative purposes by those who fear that they do not understand.

Multiculturalism is but a vehicle to becoming integrated into the Australian fabric of society like those who came before them, like the English, Scottish, Welsh, the Irish and Chinese, The Italians, Greeks, Baltic and Germanic nations in the past 60 years have integrated so well into the Australian society that it is difficult to tell the origins of one's ancestors. The Vietnamese, Cambodians, Burmese, Somalians', Iraqis', Afghanis' South Africans, and many others are also becoming part of the Australian culture and are blending in.

Saturday was the official opening of the antipodes Glendi Festival and Lonsdale Street was packed to the rafters so to speak. There were the usual speeches by the organisers and political leaders alike, followed by the various dancing groups that involved the Pallaconian Brotherhood, Pan Macedonian Association of Melbourne, Cyprus Community of Melbourne and Victoria, Central Pontian Association of Melbourne & Victoria "Pontiaki Estia", Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, Pan Cretan Association of Melbourne, and Panepirotic Federation of Australia.

One bright spark looked up and noticed that the Australian flag was missing from the Greek orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria and before you could say "Strike a light cobber", an Australian flag was flying next to the Hellenic flag. It would have been embarrassing if only the Hellenic flag was flying during the visit of the Australian Prime Minister, Julia Gillard and the opposition leader Tony Abbot.

Having said that, one could assume that during the visit by the "pollies" that some "Pork barrelling election promises" were being made by The Federal Government. It is believed that they pledged approximately 2 million dollars, to the Greek orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria. This however was followed by the opposition who did not wish to be outdone by mirroring the grant if it won government at the next election.

Whatever the case, it is now public knowledge that the Greek orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria have been offered funds to support its quest to create a new building on its current site. A project that is worthy of Pericles one might muse while others feel that it may be beyond the capabilities of the Greek Community. Whatever the case maybe and whoever has the final word in the end, it does demonstrate that Australians of Hellenic background have the courage, tenacity and the resilience to see it through.

On the Sunday, Antipodes organisers, entertainment groups and stall representatives arrived early to ensure that the marquees containing the paraphernalia, products, recruiting materials and other objects of interest were in order and ready for the remainder of the day. The media in the form of 3XY, ERT, Neos Kosmos and others had lined the street and were busily preparing for the Sundays festivities while their neighbours representing the Hellenic regions, communities, educational, professional and elderly care such as Fronditha were ensuring that they would be in unison.

The early visitors were arriving and taking their seats outside the various Greek shops that had lined the gutters with additional tables and chairs and one could have sworn that you were back in Greece at some tavern on the sides of the Parthenon or on the heights of some Cretan mountain. The feel and look was very Hellenic and the organisers for 2012 had gone to great lengths to provide the appropriate "Hellenic" atmosphere in a Australian setting amongst the eucalyptus trees.

The entertainment area was first to start their engines which choked passer bys with the smoke, the smell of charcoal was heavy in the air, the smell of the lamb and chicken giro being turned slowly, wafted through the air and the loudspeakers not to be outdone were being tested. Shopkeepers were seen to be cleaning out the front of their stores, the odd shout in Greek could be heard above the din of Australian being spoken with a variety of accents, some of which were heavy while others were punctuated with the recognizable Aussie drawl.

Music, in the form of a and a violin and lyre were first heard to arise from various stalls and beneath the marquees. The music grew in crescendo as the multitude of visitors increased to the point it was difficult to discern which music belonged to which region of Hellas. It was all in good fun and the many that attended the festival appeared to be enjoying their surroundings and the atmosphere.

The weather, in this year's Antipodes Glendi festival has certainly played a huge part in its success and as such has been one of the influencers that enticed the people of Melbourne and Victoria to come out of their homes and make a day of visiting the antipodes Glendi festival. Whether it was for the children, the youth, parents, friends, relatives and/or the elderly, there was food, drink, rest rooms and entertainment available to suit everyone's tastes and no one was left out.

What was of interest was that at no stage was there the usual bargaining or haggling over the prices being charged for the food and drinks being provided as it was plain to see that to put on a festival of this size cost money. The 2012 Australian Hellenic Antipodes Glendi Festival was a huge success and organisers responsible should be congratulated. **Peter Adamis - Watsonia**