

VICTORIAN MULTICULTURAL AWARD



Peter Adamis

Peter Adamis was born in Pellana, (near Sparta Lakonia), Greece on the 28 March 1950 and in 1954 migrated to Fremantle West Australia with his parents and Brother Phillip. In 1955, twins Kon and Helen were born in Perth. In 1956 the parents Vasili and Kaliopi decided to relocate to Melbourne to maximise employment opportunities and create a stable family environment. Peter and his siblings grew up in a multicultural environment that included many displaced persons and refugees from the European theatres of war during WW2. The family lived in Windsor, Prahran from 1957 to 1971 enabling Peter to attend Prahran Primary, Toorak Central, Prahran Technical and Footscray Technical Colleges where completed an electrical apprenticeship. As an apprentice, he was fortunate not to have been on the Westgate Bridge when it collapsed in 1970. Had it not been for the foreman, John Baker changing the work schedules on that fateful day, Peter and John Baker would have suffered the same fate as the other workmen. It appeared that life had other things destined for him.

In 1971, one week after completing his electrical apprenticeship, Peter, without his parent's knowledge enlisted in the Australian Regular Army. As a member of the Australian Military Forces, Peter experienced life as an Infantry Soldier, Administrator, Careers Counselor, Survivalist and Warrant Officer. He was also exposed to fighting natural disasters such as fires, floods, hurricanes and cyclones. As a soldier, he represented Australia in New Guinea, Singapore, Malaya, United Kingdom, the USA and Greece. It is of interest to note that Peter is the only Australian of Greek heritage to have served in the Australian Defence Force in excess of 25 years service.

In 1975, Peter married and had four children, David, Paul, Matthew and Mark. However in 1984, the marriage broke down as a result of service commitments amongst other matters and the children lived with their mother. In 1988, Peter was granted custody of his four sons; David, Paul, Matthew and Mark and took on the mantle of a single parent, raising the four children on his own. With four sons to raise and still a member of the Australian Defence Force, Peter's commitment to both responsibilities did not waver and the experiences enabled him to have a greater understanding of children as a single parent.

In 1990 Peter became interested in multicultural aspects facing the Australian Defence Force and their impact on recruitment. He was given the opportunity to complete a research paper on Multicultural issues relating to Australians of Non English Speaking background.

During his research Peter interviewed many hundreds of parents and students and realised the untapped potential of the various multicultural communities long before they became relevant and acceptable to the Australian community.

The research document was later utilised as a paper for the understanding of multicultural issues within the Australian Defence. Despite being a single parent, he managed to make time between his commitments to his children and Defence Force to become involved in the wider Victorian Community and pursue his interests in multicultural community affairs. His love of community based work led him to becoming an active member and Management Committee Councillor of the Melbourne based Lycurgus Hellenic Club, and member to the PanLakonian Hellenic Club of Victoria.

In 1991 Peter was asked by Bruce Ruxton, the President of the Victorian RSL to restructure the Hellenic RSL Club in South Melbourne and bring it into line with the Australian RSL Constitution, methodologies and administration. As a member and with the support of the Management Committee, the task was completed over a two year period. Peter continues to be a member of the Victorian RSL as a member at large and supports the Hellenic RSL as required.

In 1993 Peter was invited to take on the role Secretary for the Whittlesea Australia Day Committee in which he played a leadership advisory role to the President and that of the Committee in recommending individuals and organisations for the Whittlesea Australia Day Awards. During this period, Peter was also invited to act as an advocate on behalf of a number Whittlesea Shire families over water rights that were becoming a problem with local developers.

In 1994 Peter was invited to the Executive as an active member of the Australian Hellenic Memorial where in conjunction with the Australian Defence Force and the late Father Moutafis of St's Anargiri Church in Oakleigh, was instrumental in raising thousands of dollars towards the memorial now located within the gardens of the Victorian Shrine of Remembrance. This was a great example of how two different cultures, Australian and Hellenic could work together to produce a great fund raising result. The monument that stands there today is a testament of multiculturalism at its best.

In 1998, on discharge from the Australian Defence Force, Peter and his four sons settled in Watsonia to enable them to complete their education. Free of his military obligations, Peter was able to concentrate on developing his knowledge of community organisations, different cultures and their impact on the wider community. When the East Timor conflict erupted, Peter volunteered for overseas service but was turned down as too old for active service.

Peter was first employed as a Traffic Operations supervisor, (Turnbull Fenner Pty Ltd), collecting statistics for the communities and Councils. In 2000 he was approached by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia as a Training Operations Manager and employed within their welfare department (Employment training Connection).

This role enabled Peter to work closely with the youth, aged, disabled, unemployed members from various cultural backgrounds and the wider Victorian community. Further to this, Peter was involved providing humanitarian welfare work in the collection, distribution and provision of food parcels and support to the elderly within the Hellenic and wider community.

Suffice to say his role was challenging, satisfying and most rewarding. It was also tinged with sadness when confronted with the suicide of a member and gave him the opportunity to research the problems confronting the youth at that time. In the same year, Peter met his current wife and partner Yovanna whom he met whilst on a Welfare Training mission to Toronto Canada.

In 2003, on completion of his contract Peter was head hunted to take on a leadership role with an employment conglomerate (Skills Link West), consisting of three community organisations under the one administrative umbrella based in Broadmeadows and Glenroy. This role also enabled him to be closely involved with the underprivileged, unemployed, different cultural community groups and those with refugee status. Whilst a member of the organisation Peter fulfilled his lifelong ambition and completed a Bachelor of Adult Training and Development Degree at the University of Monash and Diploma in Training and Assessment Systems with an interest in Mature Age studies. In 2009 Peter completed his post graduate studies in Occupational Environmental Health and Safety.

In 2004, on the completion of his contract, Peter and his wife Yovanna created the consultancy firm named ABALINX, providing advice and support to community organisations on Career, Employment, Occupational Health and Safety, Mature Age Matters, Change Management and Training. His research on Mature Age studies and the barriers to employment for the Mature Age and Disabled have been published on his firm's website and open to the public. The firm also catered to the youth seeking employment, material and IT support on a voluntary and unpaid basis. Suffice to say participants and volunteers found permanent employment within six.

In 2005 during a visit to a client, Peter was invited to apply for the leadership role of the Business and Public Relations Manager with the Greek Community of Oakleigh and Districts.

On being selected, Peter began to raise the profile of the community within Victoria, Australia and the world. In addition Peter has been directly active in supporting the Oakleigh Greek Community with its fund raising projects and programs in Welfare, Benevolent Society, Youth, Aged Centre, College, Community events and functions and the Church of Sts' Anargiri. Peter has also been instrumental in raising much needed funds for the College IT network system, Access lift to the Community centre for students, creating the websites and attracting sponsors to support the Community's College interests.

In 2007, Peter was instrumental in the invitation and Public Relations for the Prime Minister of Greece visiting the Oakleigh Greek. He has also coordinated events for foreign dignitaries and overseas visitors with the aim of obtaining their assistance as potential sponsors or to provide financial support to the community. In addition he has assisted many single parent families and the elderly to survive during difficult financial and stressful periods.

Furthermore, he was also instrumental in assisting members of the community in obtaining employment and assisting them to remain employed. Peter feels that it is important that all community organisations, whether they have multicultural origins or not should become

responsible in providing support to the young and elderly within their sphere of influence. Peter is also a member of the Hellenic Business Forum. This organisation volunteer their services in raising funds for charities and providing awards to young and aspiring leaders within a multicultural environment.

In conclusion, one could say that Peter has been serving and promoting multicultural awareness, social tolerance and cohesion whilst a member of the Australian Defence Force and during his involvement with communities in the Melbourne and Metropolitan areas for the past 35 years. Peter's commitment, leadership and dedication to the community and its organisations within the multicultural sphere and the wider community are unquestionable. His devotion and commitment to furthering multicultural concepts and policies are known, but to only a few.

Peter is reluctant to advertise his involvement and shuns the limelight, preferring to remain one of the guardians and a silent achiever behind the scenes to ensure community services are provided to community members as required. Never one to shun a challenge, Peter will always fight the good fight, he has a strong sense of justice and is determined never to give up where other have failed.

He has a thirst for knowledge and wide range of interests, enjoying poetry, reading, research, writing, information technology, gardening and travel. Peter is blessed to have many friends and supporters and many consider him truly a gem in the rough who will always be there for you no matter the obstacles.