



Queensland Launch of the Hellenic Australian Lawyers Association
Banco Court
Friday, 30 January 2015, 5.15pm

**The Hon Tim Carmody
Chief Justice**

Introduction

Good evening (*kal-is-pairer*), it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Banco Court on this special evening for the launch of the Hellenic Australian Lawyers Association in Queensland.

Welcome, in particular, to Chief Justice French AC of the High Court of Australia. I also note with pleasure the attendance of Justices Kiefel AC and Keane and other judicial colleagues who have travelled from inter-state; Chief Justice Kourakis of South Australia, Justice Kyrou of the Victorian Court of Appeal and Justice Perry of the Federal Court in Sydney. I am also delighted that so many judges from this court and the Federal, Family, District, Magistrates, and Federal Circuit Courts are joining us and also that the Banco Court is the venue chosen for your Queensland launch.

In extending the warmest greetings to the Australian lawyers of Hellenic origin who are present in large numbers this evening, let me say “kalosórisede”.

Even though it was only recently established, the Hellenic Australian Lawyers Association in Melbourne already has hundreds of members. That Association is lucky to have as its National Patron, Chief Justice Kourakis, as its Victorian Patron Justice Kyrou, and as its Queensland Patron Justice Philippides.

The establishment of the Association reflects the significant number of lawyers of Hellenic background that can be found at the highest levels of all branches of the legal profession and all tiers of the judiciary throughout Australia. Here in Queensland, many lawyers of Hellenic background have contributed to and played a significant role in our legal community. And in this regard it is fitting that I note at the outset the attendance of current



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lawyers from the Comino, Freeleagus and Feros families who feature so prominently in the history of Queensland practitioners.

History of Hellenic-Australians

It is difficult to talk about Hellenic-Australians without acknowledging the Diaspora that unfolded against a backdrop of unemployment, war with Turkey, a struggling economy and natural disasters.¹

From around 1880 that migration spread to Australia.²

For the majority this new land whispered hopes of employment and increased opportunities.

However, the resettlement of the Hellenic community in Australia at that time was far from smooth. In addition to the difficulty of leaving behind their “*patrida*” (the Greek word for fatherland),³ the displaced encountered a degree of hostility and prejudice from its host country.

Yet in the face of generations of adversity, the Hellenic population has succeeded in retaining its remarkably rich culture and strong sense of identity.

The Second World War, and particularly the Battle of Crete in 1941, signalled the end of this dark period and triggered a transformation in national attitude.⁴ The ties forged out of these turbulent events have been aptly described as “bonds of blood and friendship”.⁵

This new and closer relationship was embodied in the actions of Australian soldier Geoff Edwards who fought in Crete.

¹ Anastasios Myrodis Tamis, *The Greeks in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 2005) 17.

² Ibid.

³ Constantine Castan, *The Greeks of Brisbane* (University of Queensland Press, 2013) 6.

⁴ Ibid 46.

⁵ Andreas Papageorgopoulos, *The Greeks in Australia – A Home Away from Home* (Alpha Books Sydney, 1981) 46.



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In spite of the extreme dangers it posed, Edwards, along with many other Australian and New Zealand comrades were given refuge, food and shelter by the clergy of Crete.⁶ The monks of Preveli monastery later aided Edwards in his escape to Egypt.

Following his return to Australia, Corporal Edwards built a church a few hours by car from Perth named St. John the Theologian⁷ as a monument to the altruism of the people of Preveli.

Later the Greek nation did something that no other country in Europe had dared do. They said “no” to the might of the Axis forces and refused to surrender to their superiority and control. This small country valiantly stood firm against the face of an invading enemy despite being greatly outnumbered (10-1) and underequipped. Not for the first time in history the Greek soldier, not only resisted, but pushed the enemy back into Albania. It was a turning point in the early days of the war that helped to shatter the Nazi and Fascist myth of invincibility and right to rule that enabled the Russian forces to mobilize and defend its borders.

We, the distant beneficiaries of that great act of defiance and fighting spirit are truly grateful.

As has been rightly said before and bears repeating:

The distance that separates our two countries is very great. But this distance is nullified by the spiritual bond created during the war and the feelings of the Greek people towards this friendly country of Australia, which flow here to embrace this vast land of yours and to express our admiration, affection and gratitude.⁸

Even today we can see these historical bindings being strengthened and remembered through Greece’s involvement in Australia’s celebration of the 100th anniversary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli during World War I.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.



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We are also recipients of a great Hellenic legacy of philosophical thought and it is appropriate to acknowledge that important concepts of our legal framework are founded on those great pillars.

Diversity in the legal profession

This launch is in many ways a reflection and celebration of the enriching diversity within the legal profession in the State of Queensland. The significance of having a profession that mirrors the multiformity of its people is crucial for access to justice. This reality cannot be stressed enough. In a Lecture delivered at the House of the Association of the Bar of the City of New York in 2001, Eric H. Holder, a former Deputy Attorney General in the United States of America, noted:

A legal profession lacking in significant racial and gender diversity can only go so far in combating the sense of alienation that disadvantaged clients feel when regularly confronted by an establishment of a distinctly different colour and sex.⁹

Mr Holder goes further to caution that:

All of society is negatively impacted when a homogenous legal profession is unable to deal, as effectively as it might, with an increasingly smaller, more varied and protean world. One of our nation's greatest assets in this new world is our racial and ethnic diversity and any profession that does not take advantage of this does so at its economic peril. If we are to compete effectively we must make use of all of our resources.¹⁰

These statements are just as apposite to our profession here in Australia today. We are a nation that proudly and willingly embraces a wide assortment of races and cultures.

⁸ Ibid 48.

⁹ Eric H. Holder, 'The importance of diversity in the legal profession' (2002) 23(6) *Cardozo Law Review* 2241, 2247.

¹⁰ Ibid 2248.



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Today the Greek community is one of, if not, of the largest ethnic minority groups in our nation and we must be always mindful of working together to recognise and promote a legal profession that reflects the multicultural spirit of the State in which we live and work each day.

The secret of change is to focus all your energy not on fighting the old but on fighting for the new.

Enduring Hellenic values, virtues and ideals

Finally, there remains an essential quality and defining characteristic of Hellenic society to be acknowledged and applauded.

Some of you will have heard me talk about it before. It encompasses many other higher ideals and earthly virtues such as courage, humility, clarity, pride and modesty, respect and dignity, wisdom and fairness, godliness and goodness. It has many names and meanings but only the Greeks sum it all up in a single word – *philotimo*. This ideal gives true practical expression to Christ's golden rule – treat as you would be treated – but has an added dimension beyond self and embodies all the elements of a good and decent life.

It is sacrifice for the greater good. Giving of self. It is something we should all aspire to.

It is what those we honour tonight both have and give. They proudly carry and pass on the cherished traditions of their society and culture. For that we thank and salute them.

I commend all those involved in the establishment of the Hellenic Australian Lawyers Association for their initiative and foresight.

Again, ladies and gentlemen, I warmly welcome you all. I am sure we are in store for a fascinating, informative and enjoyable evening.

Thank you (*ef - caristore*).