



Thessaloniki – Melbourne Sister Cities Historical and other information

By Iakovos Garivaldis – March 2008



Thessaloniki Association "The White Tower"
439 High Street, Northcote 3070





Pan-Macedonian Association of Melbourne & Victoria



Νομαρχιακή Αυτοδιοίκηση Θεσσαλονίκης

Thessaloniki–Melbourne Sister Cities since 1984 Historical and other information

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Thessaloniki

Affiliated in 1984, Melbourne's sister city relationship with Thessaloniki recognises Melbourne's large and dynamic Greek community and the significant contribution the people have made to our city.

Thessaloniki, located on the Gulf of Thermaikos, is the second largest city in Greece. It has become one of the Mediterranean's most important trade and communication centres, with a population of more than one million. It has a thriving nightlife, with great restaurants and a wealth of sights and attractions.

Proceedings and Sister-City Ceremonies

The Sister City Relationship between Thessaloniki and Melbourne started with a number of visionaries from all walks of life within the Melbourne Community. The people who made it all possible in order to address the growing need of those Australians who originated from that part of the world to exchange cultural and traditional activities as well as allowing the wider Australian community to witness same were:

The Right Honourable Lord Mayor E.J. Beacham
City of Melbourne

M. I. Georgiadis Acting Consul General of Greece
Greek Government

Mr D. Dollis Minister for Ethnic Affairs
Ministry for Ethnic Affairs

Mr Anastasios Kolokotronis Retired Aircraft Engineer
Thessaloniki Association "The White Tower"

Mr Christos Kosmidis
Pan-macedonian Association President

Dr Luis Doukas, Scientist, RMIT University
Greek Orthodox Community Of Melbourne & Victoria

Ms Vivian Morris
Greek Community Journalist, "Neos Kosmos"

Mr. G Sheppard
Ethnic Affairs Commission

Mr Theo. Sidiropoulos MP
State Government of Victoria

Mr. Ev. Didaskalou
Pan-macedonian Association

Mr. L Cox Union Official
Victorian Trades Hall Council

Mr. N.P. Servos Councilor
City of Melbourne

The successive events that marked the days and ceremonies in chronological order went like this:

7th March 1984. The Committee of Thessaloniki Association for the first time discussed the reception of representatives from the Municipality of Thessaloniki for the Sister-City proposal meetings between Melbourne and Thessaloniki.

17th March 1984. The contingent from the City of Thessaloniki including the Mayor Mr Theodore Manavis with his wife, as well as the rest of their Committee was received at Melbourne airport. Receiving them were representatives from Thessaloniki Association Committee and Pan-Macedonian Association Committee, as well as representatives from the City of Melbourne.

18th March 1984. A welcome dinner was organised by the Thessaloniki Association members at the "Greek Tavern" to welcome the visitors in Melbourne.

19th March 1984. At 2.30pm there was a meeting of all concerning parties with the City of Melbourne in discussions about the procedures of sistership. Present were Christos Kosmidis (P.M.A.), Anastasios Kolokotronis (T.A.W.T.), Dr Louis Doukas (RMIT), Consul of Greece Mr Georgiadis, a member of S.C.T.U. and representatives from the City of Melbourne. The actual ceremony was to take place at 7.00pm the same day. At the conclusion of proceedings The Right Honourable

Mayor of Melbourne Cr E.J. Beacham organized a celebratory dinner for all involved.

20th March 1984. Representatives from Thessaloniki Association were received in order for a single person to be selected as the representative for the Sister-City Committee. A concert organized by the City of Melbourne was held at the Art Centre and with free entry to the public.

21st March 1984. Mr C. Kosmidis and A. Kolokotronis took the City of Thessaloniki representatives for a tour of Melbourne.

22nd March 1984. It was organized that the visitors from Thessaloniki would be taken to the Swagman in Eltham for dinner – dance.

23rd March 1984. The visitors were taken to Port Melbourne where they were offered fresh Melbourne fish and Thessaloniki 'Retsina' (a type of wine).

24th March 1984. The visitors were taken to the Victorian Market for shopping in the morning whilst at night they were taken to the Palatas Reception in a dinner organized by the Pan-Macedonian Association of Melbourne.

25th March 1984. Greek National Day – At 10.00am the visitors were taken to the Evagelismos Greek Orthodox Church after which the Consul General of Greece put up a lunch at the Consulate Offices. In the afternoon they all joined the Greek Independence Parade.

After the above events there was a committee formed (see list of participants above) which convened once a month on a Thursday morning and the decisions and rulings were sent to the Municipality of Thessaloniki.

Melbourne Thessaloniki sister city logo

The Melbourne Thessaloniki sister city logo reflects the most significant image from each city.

The leaf represents Melbourne's eclectic blend of natural and man-made attractions - our world famous parks and gardens.

Thessaloniki is represented by the 'White Tower'. The function of the Tower, which dates back to the 15th Century, has changed many times and now houses Thessaloniki's Byzantine museum.

When anyone visits the City of Thessaloniki it is of great importance to visit the shore where the "White Tower" is and witness the panoramic view of the active town and its gardens.



Greece's Melbourne-based community

Melbourne has the third largest Greek population in the world. In fact, 47 per cent of Australia's Greek population lives in Melbourne.

Many Greek organisations in Melbourne cater to the varying needs of the Greek community. The City of Melbourne works closely with many of these organisations to present a calendar of events.

One of these organizations is **Thessaloniki Association "The White Tower"** which thrives in promoting and carrying on the flag of the Sister City relationships every year. Based at Northcote, Thessaloniki Association holds several events to commemorate this relationship including the **Annual Anniversary Festival** fully supported by the City of Melbourne, the Victorian Multicultural Commission and several other local government and business groups, is usually held at Federation Square in Melbourne in November. The Association also actively supports every function the City of Melbourne is organizing in celebrating this bond, when they invite government representatives from Greece to continue what has now become a tradition.

Please take time to visit the web-site of Thessaloniki Association and see historical photographs and promotions of events and activities at this internet address www.thessaloniki.org.au .

Partnerships and support

Access Dinghy Foundation

The City of Melbourne assists in raising funds for the Sailability project. The Sailability program is designed to provide sailing opportunities for the disabled, children and the elderly, using Melbourne-designed and manufactured access dinghies. An access dinghy is a single person sailing craft. These are affordable and intended for community, non-elite sailing. They are designed to introduce people of all abilities to the joy of sailing.

Sailability Hellas

Sailability Hellas is a program devised by the Access Dinghy Foundation to introduce access dinghies to Athens and Thessaloniki in Greece.

“Since 1997, the Access Dinghy Foundation and City of Melbourne have been working together to establish Sailability clubs in a number of Melbourne's sister cities. ADF is honoured to be associated with City of Melbourne, who is making a real difference to the lives of people with disabilities in Osaka, Thessaloniki and Tianjin, through the activity of sailing. City of Melbourne is assisting to make the lives of disadvantaged communities a little brighter.”

Thessaloniki – the Ancient City

Thessaloniki, the capital of the Macedonia Province in Greece, is a city rich in history, a history that goes back to as many as 2320 years.

The Byzantine churches, one may see while touring the city, have been used as places of worship and Christianity for centuries. The Roman constructions, the Muslim buildings, spring up all over the city; all of them contributing to your getting well acquainted with its history, while at the same time the city's modern architecture asserts itself convincingly.

However, one will have a complete view of the city only after visiting the open country of the Prefecture, including its water biotopes, the beautiful beaches of Thermaikos and Strimonikos gulf, the hot water springs and the multiple interest events that take place in those areas.

Thessaloniki was named in 316BC by general Kassandros, after his wife, the daughter of Philip II and half-sister to Alexander the Great.

Thessaloniki has been fought over and ruled by nearly every neighbouring country. It was finally returned to Greece's rule in 1913 during the first Balkan war, ending almost 500 years of rule by the Ottoman Empire (1430-1912).

Since then, the city has been destroyed by fire (1917), rebuilt (1920s), occupied by German forces during World War 2 (1940s), experienced a severe earthquake (1978), and named Europe's Capital of Culture in 1997.

Business and economic climate

The location of Thessaloniki was a great benefit for its development. It is on the Thermaic Gulf and on the Roman military highway, via Egnatia. It was also an important trade route to the Balkans.

In current times, Thessaloniki has become a leading industrial and modern business centre with the country's second busiest port. Since the 1960s it has benefited from the construction of a large industrial complex which features oil refineries, petrochemical plants and steel works.

Chief industries include foundries, shipyards, flour and textile mills, while the city also produces tobacco, soap, liquors, hides, bricks, tiles and flour.

Culture

Located in northern Greece, Thessaloniki is a remarkably interesting centre of rich cultural diversity. Jazz, open-air theatre, wine, traditional folk festivals, dance and music celebrations are some of the events that contribute to the city's bright cultural life.

The Aristotelian University of Thessaloniki and numerous other institutions contribute to the academic and cultural life of Thessaloniki. Among them are the Archaeological and Byzantine museums, the Folklore museum, Theatres and Orchestras and the Institute for Balkan Studies.

For more information you can also visit the Thessaloniki City Guide at <http://www.saloniki.org/>

Bibliography

The author would like to acknowledge the following sources for the above information

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- <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au>
- **Municipality of Thessaloniki** web-site
- <http://www.thessalonikicity.gr>
- **Prefecture of Thessaloniki** web-site
- <http://www.nath.gr>
- **Thessaloniki Association "The White Tower"** web-site
- <http://www.thessaloniki.org.au/>
- **Mr Anastasios Kolokotronis** (diary of events)