



## An Ambassador Caught Unawares

**Australian Ambassador to Athens, H.E. John Griffin**

Hours before sunrise in mid-August, my partner and I lugged our bags over the cobble-stone streets of Rhodes Old Town, heading to the airport to catch a dawn flight. Little secret: I'm not a morning person! But this trip was one much looked forward to, and it promised to be worth struggling for.

**We were flying to Kastellorizo.**

Immigration links as well as wartime bonds are an essential foundation for Greece-Australia relations, and Kastellorizo occupies an early and important part of that story. I had looked forward to visiting the island and meeting the people, especially those who admirably keep this connection alive.

Our visit was made possible – and most comfortable – with the help of the charming and indefatigable Roslyn Geronikolas, the Embassy's volunteer consular Warden for the South Aegean. How lucky we are to have someone like her helping us out. In addition to arranging the meetings with the communities, both in Kastellorizo and Rhodes, Roslyn flew with us and looked after us the whole time in Kastellorizo.

After a heart-stopping moment when it seemed as though we could reach out of the plane window and touch the cliff as we came in to land, we were introduced to Kastellorizo airport – certainly a

different experience from all the soulless international terminals one usually shuffles through in this diplomatic line of work – and for all the world like the little airport at Mackay, North Queensland, where I grew up.

We were taken into town by the engaging and helpful Achilios in his taxi, past the army barracks, where a single, very dignified cat stood sentry on the wall surrounding the jeep pool.

Having settled us in at the hotel, Roslyn gave us breakfast (since our charming hotel in Rhodes Old Town hadn't actually been serving breakfast at 4.30 am, bacon and eggs never tasted so good!) before ushering us into Nikolaos' boat to visit the famous Blue Grotto.

The Grotto was a stunning sight and, unlike the one in Capri, we had it nearly to ourselves. But it is Nikolaos's stories of local fishermen pulling refugees from the sea last summer that stay in the mind and the heart. Many times Nikolaos had to cut and lose his fishing nets rushing to help drowning people. This is another instance that reveals the true, generous, humane spirit of Greece.





We went to call on the acting mayor, Mr George Samsakos, at his office. On the wall behind his desk, a historical panoramic photo showed a much larger pre-war town when, according to Lawrence Durrell's *The Greek Islands*, there were eight seaplane services a day from Paris. I was left with a powerful impression of the indomitable spirit of Kastellorizans who re-built their town and their lives after so much destruction.



The brief talk with Mr Samsakos brought us up to date with the present situations of the island. Roslyn kindly helped interpret for us. Here and later, we learned not only of the difficulties facing small and remote islands in this time of crisis, but also of how people like the *Friends of Kastellorizo* try to help improve the quality of life on the island. This is where the connections between countries and between people shine at their best.

After a brisk stroll around the quay, naturally pausing for a photo in Plateia Australias, we arrived a little, fashionably late for a coffee gathering with about thirty members of the

Greek-Australian community in Kastellorizo. We had a good talk and a good laugh. Stories of families of several generations were shared with us. Not for the first time during my assignment in Greece was I struck by the deep attachment Greek-Australians cherish for the land of their ancestors as well as their new home on the other side of the world.



On the advice of the superbly friendly and efficient Maria Marinakis, we had dinner at the wonderful *Ta Platania* restaurant up by the ruined church. (The restaurant of the two sisters is how I remember it.) The service was so friendly and warm – as if we were family members – the food excellent, and the setting magical. I half-expected a movie director to call “Cut!” at any moment. Our walk back down the hill past the church and the graveyard and some empty houses was suitably spooky and atmospheric – the moon casting long, eerie shadows obligingly.

It was a short trip, but sweet and uplifting. And we are most touched to know that the connections between Kastellorizo and her descendants worldwide are not only kept alive but also nurtured in a fruitful cooperation and an enduring bond of friendship. We knew this trip was going to be good, but we learned and appreciated much more than expected: an ambassador caught unawares indeed!



# The Jackomos story – it's in the blood

by Connie Gregory, Melbourne



Kastellorizian picnic 1928 (includes the Jackomos family)



Andrew at the inaugural IPAA Victoria Jackomos Oration (Photo source: IPAA Victoria)

Andrew Jackomos is an Indigenous Australian who also treasures his rich Kastellorizian cultural heritage. Andrew was appointed Victoria's first Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in 2013. The position is attached to the Commission for Children and Young People, and is independent of government. Prior to that he was an executive officer in the Justice Department where he oversaw many reforms in the legal system relating to Aboriginal people. He founded, and was director of Victoria's Koori Justice Unit and has 30 years of experience in Indigenous policy at federal and state level. He was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2006 for his work with the Aboriginal Justice Agreement and in improving justice outcomes for the Koori community. He is one of Victoria's most senior and widely respected Indigenous administrators.

Practically all his working life he has been involved in roles connected to improving the lot of Aboriginal people. Inspired by the groundbreaking work of his parents, his siblings and family are also active in the field.

Andrew's father Alick Jackomos, OAM, was brought up in the tight-knit Melbourne Kastellorizian community. His mother Merle Jackomos (nee Morgan), OAM, a Yorta Yorta Aboriginal woman, was born in Cummeragunja, NSW. When his parents married in 1951,

they became joint vocal advocates for Aboriginal rights, and played a pivotal role in many national and Victorian Aboriginal community organisations. Their work helped change Australian government policy in part through the successful 1967 referendum.

The Kastellorizian community in Victoria at that time, it is fair to say, wanted their children to marry Kastellorizians, and maybe other Greeks. Times have changed, but back in 1951 it was a major break with tradition. Alick Jackomos followed his heart, and together with his wife Merle, achieved many milestones in the long struggle for Aboriginal rights.

When Andrew's father Alick died in 1999, the esteem, bordering on reverence, in which he was held was manifest with 1000 people packed into the Northcote Town Hall, with milling crowds outside and a traffic jam in the area. The Australian flag, the Aboriginal flag, and the Greek flag were proudly displayed at the service.

Much has been written about Andrew's parents. *The book A Man of all Tribes, The life of Alick Jackomos*, was published in 2006. Much also has been written about Andrew and his aims and objectives as Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and young People.

The Institute of Public Administration Australia (IPAA) Victoria, established the Jackomos Oration in 2013 to honour the achievements of Merle and Alick Jackomos who have been a symbol of Aboriginal reconciliation for more than six decades. Their son, Andrew Jackomos gave the inaugural Oration, preceded by the intermingled notes of a bouzouki and didgeridoo.

***“Strong culture is central to a strong family and a strong community.”***

The writer was amongst the packed audience at the Oration, with a group of Kastellorizian family members and friends. It was a magical experience to witness this charismatic man, and hear the remarkable story of his parent's achievements and his message of hope for the future. For many in the audience it was also a lesson on the harsh reality of the history of early Greek and Kastellorizian migration to Australia, but delivered with humour and warmth.



Andrew concluded the Oration with these thoughts:

- Yes it is true that it takes a village to grow a child and that is the ethos of Indigenous culture and our community.
- Strong culture is central to a strong family and a strong community. The best place for Aboriginal kids is in strong families and our challenge as a community is to make that happen.
- If you see an injustice, speak up and take a stand. Don't be silent in the face of injustice.
- Non-Aboriginals, such as my father, such as many people in this room can and are making valuable contributions to our community. More people need to ask: how can I contribute?
- We need to invest more in prevention and early intervention programs to keep young families strong and together, and when intervention is necessary that children are kept in the community and in their culture.



Family group photo and other Kastellorizians at the inaugural Oration in 2013

It seems that all Andrew's life has been an apprenticeship to take on the challenging role of Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, and he wants action. In October this year two reports were tabled in the Victorian Parliament – "Always was, always will be Koori children – Systemic inquiry into services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria", and "In the child's best interests – Inquiry into compliance with the intent of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in Victoria". The statewide review found a substantial divergence of policy and program intent to what occurs in practice.

I was privileged to attend the public launch of these two inquiries. Andrew reported that of the 130 recommendations contained in the tabled documents, not one was rejected by the Victorian government. To put the recommendations into action is a huge task, and Andrew will be at the forefront of that work.

*"The challenge is to find carers for children who have been removed from their homes."*

Andrew, and his sister Esmi, arrived at my home for an interview, bearing Greek sweets and family photographs. Into his third year as Commissioner, I asked what are his major concerns and challenges.

"When I was appointed as Commissioner I looked at each individual case of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in Victoria. As at June 2013 there were 922 in out-of-home care and now there are 1800 cases. The great majority of these are placed in non-Aboriginal homes and the great majority are managed by non-Aboriginal organisations. Only fourteen per cent of Aboriginal children are case managed by Aboriginal organisations and the majority of those are placed in Aboriginal homes."

"One of the things that I have been party to is to seek the support of the government to have the placement of all out-of-home Aboriginal children into the care of the Aboriginal community organisations."

While the great majority of Koorie children in Victoria are growing up in loving, safe and culturally strong families, Andrew said that: "The challenge is to find carers for children who have been removed from their homes, from their culture and their community, and it is a fact that the number of carers, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal is decreasing."

"Carers are predominantly grandparents who care for their grandchildren, but carers can be Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. We can't get enough good carers, and while I definitely would want all Aboriginal children placed through Aboriginal organisations with Aboriginal carers there are just not enough. What is needed is support for the carers – remuneration, support services, and training. What we must remember is that every child that is removed from parents faces a degree of trauma, even in utero.

Of course the ideal is to keep Aboriginal children, as for all children at home, but when it is not safe or practical do so, case management by an Aboriginal organisation with Aboriginal carers is what I am striving for," said Andrew.

Another area of concern is respite for carers, especially for grandparents who are sometimes looking after five or six children. "Volunteers from anything from one hour every three months, or whatever else they can provide in the way of respite would be wonderful," said Andrew.

Esmi Jackomos who has been involved in Aboriginal issues all her life now actively works with Latrobe University's Bouverie Centre in the Indigenous program that offers clinical training and a Masters in family therapy. The majority of students are Aboriginal and training takes place across the state of Victoria but also in Coolangatta, Cooktown and Townsville.

"We also have a specific program for carers and for Aboriginal families and carers," said Esmi, quoting the example of the Mallee District Aboriginal Services (MDAS). "It has a most successful supportive program for expectant mothers, antenatal and postnatal – the whole gamut of services to work with the Aboriginal communities to improve the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their babies."

Andrew and Esmi know the value of education and training in alleviating the number of Aboriginal children being taken into out-of-home care. Andrew said that his recommendation is that the government works with communities to fund similar services across the State. "Of the 260 vulnerable children born in the MDAS program, not one has gone into care," he said.

It is obvious that Aboriginal agencies are working hard to help young people to feel safe, to realise their cultural identity and maintain family connections which in turn works towards the wellbeing of the Aboriginal community in Victoria.

Andrew said that often the hardest part of his job is getting details from the authorities and good current data, and that the saddest part of his job is his involvement in the child death reviews, looking at how the system failed the child. He is of course quite vocal in the media about the high rates of Aboriginal children languishing in the youth justice detention centres, with high remand rates putting pressure on detention centres, making it more difficult to safely manage – and rehabilitate – the State's most vulnerable children. "For Aboriginal children, being separated from family, kin and community can compound their loss of identity, culture and community," he said.

"From the moment we were born we were involved through Mum and Dad's involvement in a variety of Aboriginal issues, and in honor of them we continue to do it with our children. All our family is involved in Aboriginal rights in one way or another" said Andrew.



"Our father, Alick Jackomos, was a key player in the early development of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency and Michael, my brother, was one of its first workers, and my sister Esmai's work is making a difference through actively working in the education field."

*"What we must remember is that every child that is removed from parents faces a degree of trauma."*

Andrew has more to say on education: "Not everybody wants or needs to go to University – not enough work is being done in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to promote the trades and vocational education. Also one of the problems is the lack of mentors and role models." Addressing that issue is also one of his recommendations.

Over afternoon tea we shift the conversation to Kastellorizo and look at the Jackomos genealogy on the website run by Allan Cresswell ([www.castellorizo.org](http://www.castellorizo.org)).

Andrew Jackomos and Esmai Jackomos are among the 151 descendants of Jakov Jakomos who was born in Kastellorizo in 1815. His great-grandparents, and grandparents were also born on Kastellorizo. His grandfather Andrew Jackomos, married Asimina Auguste in Melbourne in 1923.

A couple of years ago, Florence Livery organised an Augustes family reunion in Melbourne, but neither Andrew, nor his siblings, Esmai and Michael, could attend as they were away. (Their Augustes connection is through their grandmother). A private viewing of the presentation was later arranged for them at Florence's house. "We laughed and we cried around the computer and can I tell you, the three of them have such an honest and beautiful belly laugh, you cannot help but be carried away with it. It was truly touching to witness how Andrew, Esmai and Michael embrace both their Aboriginal and Greek heritage," said Florence Livery.



Andrew Jackomos in Kastellorizo, April 2016

Andrew Jackomos values his Kastellorizian heritage: "I went to Kastellorizo earlier this year, and I am taking two of my four daughters there in April next year. One of my daughters got married in Tonga this August, to a local (a captain in the Tongan defence force), and another daughter is getting married next year in Cairns to a Torres Strait Islander." He laughingly adds: "The offer to take them to Kastellorizo still stands."

"My hope for my children is that they are successful in their lives, their children are healthy and they are prosperous in life.... the same as anybody else, but also proud of their culture. Two of my children from my first marriage have Torres Strait Island heritage also, and from my second marriage we have Tongan heritage. So my children have a rich cultural heritage - Greek (Kastellorizian), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and Tongan."

*"Not enough work is being done in the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community to promote the trades and vocational education."*

I mention multiculturalism and he corrects me by saying cultural heritage: "Aboriginal people are Indigenous, not multi-cultural", but tempers that with "People who don't know or acknowledge their cultural heritage have a void in their life. It is so important," and on reflection adds: "Aboriginal people say 'Who's your Mum', just like Kazzies who say 'where are you from', and there is something very true in the saying that if you don't know where you come from you don't know where you are going".



Andrew and his sister Esmai together with Connie Gregory

Esmai Jackomos' children also have a rich cultural heritage; her first two children have Greek, Aboriginal, and African-American cultural identity. Her late second husband was from the Philippines and their two children have Filipino, Aboriginal and Greek heritage. One of her three daughters married a Greek, another a Mauritian, and one an American.

When Andrew and Esmai's grandparents married and struggled to make a new life in Australia, working long hours in their fish and chip shop in North Carlton, their aspirations for their descendants would have been the same as expressed by their grandson Andrew.

When Shane Green, for the Sydney Morning Herald, interviewed Andrew soon after his appointment as Commissioner, he quoted Andrew as saying that he laughs like a Koori, cooks like a Greek, and loves a life reflective of both cultures.

It was such a pleasure, and an honour, to spend an afternoon with Andrew and Esmai who are both proud of their Kastellorizian and Koori (Aboriginal) heritage.

Interviewer's notes:

- I have mainly used the term 'Aboriginal' throughout this story. In Victoria, Australian Aboriginal people identify as 'Koori' people and in other States of Australia identify with other names, based on language and culture.
- While writing this story for Filia I felt very sad that in Australia in 2016 we would even need a Commissioner for Children and young People, let alone a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young people when it is obvious that our government should uphold the human rights and protection of all children and young people.
- An in-depth paper by Andrew Jackomos entitled: "Culture is not a 'perk' for an Aboriginal child..." is something that all Australians should read. Google it!
- A report on the '2013 Jackomos Oration' published by IPAA Victoria, is available on the web, together with an audio link.





The George and Maria Barbouttis family.



Kyriakos Barbouttis family in Townsville



Tsikos Galettis and Garifalia Karasavas wedding on Castellorizo 1908

## FAMILY REUNION: MALAXOS AND BARBOUTTIS FAMILIES

On Sunday 16 October 2016, an historic Family Reunion event was held at the Great Hall, University of Sydney. Over 220 Castellorizian relatives stemming from the Malaxos and Barbouttis families attended this event. A number of relatives came from Brisbane, Cairns, Gold Coast, Dimboola VIC, Adelaide and Perth.

The event was organised by Nick Malaxos and a team comprising of his relatives. The event was opened by Professor Katherine Georgouras OAM, the first Greek Australian woman to graduate in Medicine (Dermatology) and the first woman Professor in Dermatology in Australia. Katherine was the first woman President on the Standing Committee of Convocation at the University of Sydney. She was the first woman to become the Kastellorizian of the Year, awarded by the Kastellorizian Association VIC.

Nick Malaxos gave a detailed presentation on the origin of the names of Malaxos and Barbouttis and the names of six generations dating back from the eighteen century, including Hareclea Malaxos the first Castellorizian woman to attain tertiary qualification from the University of Athens in 1880's, Konstantinos Malaxos (Perth) who was the first Greek graduate from the University WA in the early 1950's and George Malaxos (Melbourne) who was awarded an award for literature by the then King Paul and Queen Frederica in the early 1950's. Nick Malaxos was one of three Greek Australians to be the first students to attain tertiary qualifications in Modern Greek, with Distinction in 1973.

Nick Malaxos informed the attendees that the name Malaxos came from the village of Malaxa, previously known as Revithimo, 7 kilometres from Chania, Crete. It was named Malaxa in 1663 AD honour of the local priest Kyriakos Malaxos who built a church at Revithimo to be a sanctuary for the Greek Orthodox Christians from persecution by the Turks and the Venetians. The same priest raised funds to establish a church on Castellorizo and the church was known as Aghios Yiorgos tou Malaxou. The much larger Church of Saint George now stands on the site, known as Saint George tou Santrape Luca built at the turn of the 20th century.

The first image was of a George Malaxos shown on a calendar issued by the Museum at Dimitsana, Greece, circa 1500 AD. As well, an Emmanuel Malaxos (1530-1581) wrote the Canons of the Greek Orthodox Church, and the original script is at the Museum of Dimitsana Greece. Also there was a Makarios Malaxos who was a member of the Philiki Etairia.

The first recorded Malaxos to come to Australia was Michael Malaxos who came at the turn of the 20th century and was on the inaugurating committee that established the Castellorizian Association WA in 1912. Michael's grandson is Steven Malaxos, a famous AFL player who was inducted in the Sports Hall of Fame in WA.

The attendees were informed that the name Barbouttis came from a card game known as Barbu or Le Barbu, which was prominent with bridge card players, and depicted as a bearded man with a sword over his head.

The attendees paid tribute to Lance Corporal Angelo Barbouttis, born in Darwin and moved to Townsville with his family, who was a gallant war hero during WWII. His heroism was acknowledged in the Australian Army Magazine in 1944, yet he was not awarded an appropriate medal for his bravery.

The "Dungog Chronicle" on 6 April 1944 reported "Mrs George Barbouttis has made a donation of 5 pounds to the Dungog Hospital in memory of her nephew Lance Corporal Angelo Barbouttis who was killed in action in New Guinea"

In attendance was Allan (Agapitos) Cresswell, the President of the Castellorizian Association WA and Kastellorizian of the Year 2016, who has developed an extensive Castellorizian Genealogy web site that has over 28,000 individuals listed on the site and the site has attracted over 380,000 unique visits.

As well, Dr. Nicholas George Pappas AM was in attendance who has given us the unique history of Castellorizo by producing a number of books on Castellorizo and creating a free website, available to all.



Allan Cresswell, President of the Castellorizian Association WA and Kastellorizian of the Year 2016.



Nick Malaxos presenting the origin of the names and the past generations dating from the end of 18th century.

\*\*\*\* 50% SOLD \*\*\*\*

Essence Apartments —Two Bedroom Apartments In The Heart Of Parap

**LIVE IN DARWIN'S MOST SOUGHT AFTER SUBURB**

- A short walk to Parap Shopping Village, a Darwin landmark
- Small boutique complex in leafy surrounds
- Close to beaches, sports facilities, parks & quality schools
- Take advantage of the First Home Owners Grant
- Completion due March 2017

#### CONTACT:

David Oliver : 0419 868 236  
david.oliver@elders.com.au

www.essenceparap.com.au

**Elders**

**Real Estate**  
Lic. Real estate Agent

To become a member, to advertise or for general information contact Marilyn Tsolakis,  
FoK Co-ordinator | + 61 423 776 896 | coordinator@kastellorizo.com  
www.kastellorizo.com | PO Box 2118 Churchlands, Western Australia 6018.