03/02/2020

Archbishop Makarios visits AHEPA NSW and cuts the Vasilopita



It was AHEPA NSW's great pleasure, honour and blessing to have the Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in Australia, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios at AHEPA's home in Rockdale, Sydney, Australia on Monday 20th January 2020 for the cutting of the Vasilopita.

It was the first time an Archbishop has visited the organisation in the 85 year history of the organisation.

Accompanying His Eminence Archbishop Makarios was His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago, the CEO of St Basil's Homes Fr. Nicholas Stavropoulos, Fr. Demetrios Papaoikonomou of the Resurrection of Our Lord Orthodox Church Kogarah, as well as the Director of the Office of the Archbishop, Fr. Christophoros Krikellis.

In attendance was Her Excellency Martha Mavromati; High Commissioner of the Republic of Cyprus in Australia, Hon Christos Karras; Consul General of Greece in Sydney, Katia Gzikiza; Trade Commissioner of Greece in Australia, Hon Linda Burney MP; Member for Barton, Steve Kamper MP; Member for Rockdale, as well as

other distinguished guests, AHEPA members, family and friends.

Linda Burney in her short speech acknowledged country and noted that “we seek the truth because the truth delivers freedom, delivers salvation and that is something so important for all of us. And part of that truth is a story of what happened to first nations people… Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. I hope what I have shared with you is something that feels your heart with pride and purpose.”



Steve Kamper stated how privileged he is to be a state member for Rockdale, the electorate that has one of the largest Hellenic presence in NSW and is also proud to have the presence of AHEPA in Rockdale. “I thank AHEPA for what they do on an ongoing basis keeping the Hellenic story alive through generation to generation. Without the likes of AHEPA, it doesn’t happen,” he added.
Her Excellency Martha Mavromati wished everyone a Happy New Year and sent her thoughts and prayers to the people who are suffering from the bushfires, acknowledging the Archdiocese for their support in raising money. “Let’s all hope that 2020 is going to be a better year. A better year also for my country Cyprus which is still occupied and we are fighting for our freedom… I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Eminence. I know we are always in your prayers and thoughts and we thank you because you always raise the Cyprus problem in all the meetings you have. I would like to thank all the diaspora because we know you are always by our side,” she concluded.

The Consul General of Greece in Sydney, Christos Karras stated that AHEPA NSW is one of the most prominent associations of Greek Australians in Australia. “An

association which has a distinguished record of promoting the Hellenic ideas, education, philanthropy, civil responsibilities, families and individual excellence... I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate warmly AHEPA NSW for its work and to wish everyone a happy, healthy and creative New Year," he added.



President of AHEPA NSW, Bill Skandalakis welcomed all attendees to the event and highlighted that the "organisation is dedicated to serving the Hellenic and broader Australian community impartially and equally. This is and remains our greatest objective, one that we inspire to fulfil through our great building project at Bexley North." He also announced that the organisation is donating $10,000 annually for the next 10 years to St. Andrew's Theological College and $5,000 to Bribie Island Youth Retreat and Recreation Centre (QLD).

On behalf of OEGGA (the Organisation of Hellene and Hellene Cypriot Women of Australia), President Irene Anesti, who is also a member of AHEPA, presented two cheques (each of $1,000) to His Eminence in support of the Theological College and the Youth Retreat Centre.
Before cutting the Vasilopita, His Eminence Archbishop Makarios showed attendees how to cut the Vasilopita in accordance to the tradition and ritual we have in our families with the pieces.

His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago stated that today is a special day for AHEPA and the Archdiocese. “I ask you and I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to rise even further and to achieve greater things as Australians of Greek ancestry. Together and united with your Archbishop as your leader I am sure you will do amazing things.”

In his brief address, Archbishop Makarios referred to Linda Burney’s speech about truth and added that “in order to gain the truth and to be sure we have the real truth we have to be first of all united and in love.”

“I open my arms to you, I open the arms of the Archdiocese, I give you my heart and tell you that we must come together and be one,” His Eminence added.
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