

War tribute

By Christine Panayotou

The Hellenic Youth Federation will help make history this Sunday when the Australian Hellenic Memorial Foundation unveils the winning architectural design of its commemorative memorial, the first established tribute in honour of Melbourne's Greek community.

The Memorial will pay tribute to those Greeks and Australians who lost their lives during the Greek campaign of World War II and is, according to Memorial committee member, Tony Tsourdalakis a long time coming.

"This should have been done a long time ago. The bond between the Greeks and the Australians has been strong since the Australians came to our defence in the battle of Crete."

During World War II Crete faced the greatest German paratroops attack of the war.

Australia came to the rescue with 25,000 soldiers jumping in the firing line with many plunging to their deaths. A total of 841 Australian soldiers, many of whom came from Victoria, lost their lives during the Battle of Crete. While an additional 3,000 were captured as prisoners of war.

The campaign for the memorial site which is to be established on the bounds of the Botanic Gardens along side the Shrine of Remembrance, began in 1993 when the Pancretan Community together with Bruce Ruxton submitted a proposal to the City of Melbourne to cement in stone the strong bond between the Greeks and Australians.

A year later the Memorial committee was established and five seats reserved for members of Melbourne's own Hellenic Youth Federation. HYF members Tony Tsourdalakis, John Stavrinidis, Jenny Krassopoulakis, Joanna Psarakis and Irini Frantzeskakis make up part of the Australian Hellenic Memorial committee along with the Greek community of Melbourne and Victoria, the Greek RSL, the Pancretan community and Australian Thirtyniner's Association.

But Irini Frantzeskakis says the youth have been at the forefront of all the decision making and have had the chance to voice their opinion on what the memorial should look like, represent and say.

According to Irini, design proposals for the architectural structure have come from Melbourne's leading artists with HYF part of the process of setting the criteria. Selection was based on the representation of:

- * the 842 Australia servicemen that were killed during World War II,

- * to encapsulate ideals of democracy, liberty and peace,

- * that the monument depicts an eternal image of both Australia and Greece, keeping in mind the monument will be part of future of generations.

But Irini says the committee is always on the look out for more ideas and says Greek youth should become part of creating a memorial that could be at the centre of all future Greek celebrations.

"This affects our generation most of all. Because if all future events like Greek National Independence Day are celebrated at the memorial, then we should be the ones deciding what it should look like. The youth should get involved and have a say."

The memorial ceremony will be conducted this Sunday aboard the Australian Navy Ship HMAS TORRENS. Consul General of Greece George Veis will unveil the winning design.



Heroes of war: HYF is helping future generations to remember those like Andreas Karras (l) and Menos Deligoris (r), who fought against the Italians and Germans for liberty and democracy.