

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

December 2007

Dear members,

I wish to welcome you to the Annual General Meeting of the Russian Ethnic Community Council of NSW. It gives me great pleasure to deliver my second Annual Report to you. This year was an extraordinary year not only for the Russian community but for Australia as well. For the first time in the history of Australia a Russian president, Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin set foot on to Australian soil for the APEC meeting, which was held in Sydney in September. Significantly earlier this year the Russian President also marked this 'the year of Russian language.' Both of these events were highlighted and celebrated by the Russian community in Sydney through the work, support and sponsorship of our organization. These achievements would not have been possible without the commitment and hard work by the Executive team of the RECC.

The highlight of this year was the **Russia Day** celebrations. The event was held in partnership with the Waverley Council and the Russian Speaking Association "Sootechestvenniki", in Bondi Pavilion, Bondi Beach on Sunday 3rd of June. The event was a huge success. It raised awareness of Russian traditions and culture and also promoted our organization's delivery of quality programs and activities such as the Community Settlement Services Scheme (CSSS). The distinguished guest included the Consul General of the Russian Federation, Dr. T. M. Grushko; the Mayor of Waverley, George Newhouse; the Member for Coogee, Mr. Paul Pearce; Mr Kostya Tszyu and the President of the Russian Speaking Compatriots Association, Ms Faina Polonskaya.

In June 2007 the RECC was successful in receiving a grant under the Community Settlement Services Scheme program (CSSS). The focus of the grant is to deliver settlement services in the Eastern and Western suburbs of Sydney. This program is funded for a period of one year by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship

(DIAC). This success has been made possible by our dedicated and competent Community worker, Alla Khlebakova and the hard working members of the Executive.

I have previously discussed the many challenges facing the non-for profit community organizations like RECC including the relentless task of seeking funding, sponsorships and establishing partnerships in order to meet the goals and objectives, that will benefit members of our Russian community is a challenge in itself. Once again, the Executive committee took on this challenge with outstanding success and continued to promote awareness of our organization aims and objectives.

It gives me great pleasure to now report on our important activities throughout the year.

- We are continuing to deliver Settlement Information and Referral Service to the newly arrived Russian Speaking immigrants in the Western suburbs of Sydney and have now expanded this service to include the Eastern suburbs of Sydney. During the year more than 900 clients have used the wide range of services and benefited from various seminars, workshops, English and computer classes and social group activities and vocational courses in First Aide and Aged Care. The courses are continuing to be in high demand. This would not have been possible without the initiative, dedication and total commitment of our Settlement grant worker Alla Khlebakova . In July this year Irina Lapteva joined our Settlement and Referral office in Burwood for six months. Irina has brought a world of experience to our team and I would like to thank her for the great team work and terrific results.
- Membership is continuing to grow and currently stands at well over 100 members. It is very important to note that for the organization to continue its success we must begin to make a concerted effort to attract younger members to the group who in the future can continue our work.

- Bus trips are continuing to be very popular with the Russian community. This year our Coordinator Mr George Skorniakoff has again excelled and organised another 8 excursions to places such as: Lake Macquarie cruise, mushroom picking at Oberon State Forest, Shoalhaven River cruise, Palm Beach to Bobbin Head cruise, Wine tasting at South Coast Wineries, Dolphin Watching at Jarvis Bay, Canberra Floriade, a trip to Kangaroo Valley and Fitzroy Falls. And due to great success, George is organizing another trip to the Russian Monastery at Bomballa. This time the stay will be for 5 days, 2 days extra from last year. Any profit made will again be donated to the monastery.

On behalf of the Executive I would like to express a sincere Thanks to George and Elena for without their commitment and tireless hard work these excursions would not have been possible. Thank you !

- In March we introduced the new Consul General of the Russian Federation in Sydney Dr. Tatiana M Grushko to the members of the Executive and our community worker at our Settlement and Referral Office at Burwood.
- In April we held a Senior Citizens Gala Performance at the Russian Club in Strathfield. The event was a huge success and we have applied for a similar grant in the coming year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brian Mazour and Natalie Lobastova for their successful application for the grant.
- In June, Zoya Kojevnikoff and I represented the RECC at the Russia Day Celebration Function at the Commonwealth Club in Canberra by invitation of the Russian Ambassador, Alexander Blohin.
- Also in June, Zoya Kojevnikoff, Irene Andrews and I represented the RECC at the Russia Day Celebration in Woollahra by invitation of the Consul General of the Russian Federation in Sydney Dr Tatiana M Grushko.

- In July we sponsored the ‘the year of the Russian language,’ a competition run by the Russian Chronicle, Australiada, and directed at children from Russian Community Schools throughout Sydney.
- In September I attended the Luncheon in honour of his excellency Mr Vladimir Putin by Invitation of the now former Prime Minister of Australia, John Howard at the Sydney Opera House.
- In September I also attended the presentation of books to the Waverley Library by the Moscow Government delegated by Mr Michael L’vovich Scherbachenko and the Director of the Library fund ‘ruskoe zarubezie’ Victor Moskvina. Part of this collection was given to me on behalf of the RECC to be distributed or held by our organization as we see fit. Currently these books are in storage and after the AGM they will be distributed accordingly on the advice of the Executive of the RECC.
- We were again invited to participate at the International Food Fair held at Strathfield Plaza on Saturday 13th of October. The event proved to be a very successful fundraiser for the RECC.
- We sponsored the Russian theatre group ART in the performance of “ An Ordinary Miracle “ at the Fig Tree Theatre in November this year.
- On November the 16th the Vice President Irene Andrews attended a 2007 National Multi Cultural Marketing Award Dinner for NSW put on by the Community Relations Commission.
- End of year presentation of prizes to the students of community Russian schools and to a student of Russian language at Macquarie University continues with great support and appreciation.

Nothing can be achieved without commitment, dedication and just plain hard work. These are the qualities that exemplify are shared by all members of the RECC executive committee. Without these qualities none of the above mentioned achievements would have been possible. achieved. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Executive of the RECC for their support and untiring effort for the past year.

As we grow in strength and confidence we can set new and challenging goals.

I would also like to thank the Department of Immigration and Citizenship for funding our settlement program for another year and especially our consultant Mr. January Blackburn for his guidance and invaluable help throughout the year.

Finally I would like to thank all members and supporters of the RECC. I sincerely hope that we can continue to work together for the benefit of our Russian community and our organization.

Helen Engel
President
2006-2007