

# Victorian Lebanese Community Council Inc.

مجلس الجالية اللبنانية في فكتوريا

## VLCC GAZETTE



### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ◆ 1st Anniversary Dinner
- ◆ Important Meetings
- ◆ VLCC's Members, Grants and Sponsors
- ◆ Media Coverage
- ◆ Congratulations to ...
- ◆ The Victorian Multi-cultural Awards for Excellence
- ◆ Contribute to Research
- ◆ Q & A with Ali Abdo
- ◆ Pictures from 1st year Anniversary Dinner

VLCC's Gazette Sponsor



A big thank you to Bassem Tal, Managing Director of Australian Training Corporation for sponsoring this Gazette edition.

[www.austraincorp.com.au](http://www.austraincorp.com.au)

PO Box 59, Bentleigh Vic 3204  
Mobile: 0422 144 739

### WELCOME NOTE

Hello all and welcome to the Victorian Lebanese Community Council's very own newsletter, VLCC Gazette! This newsletter will be filled with info on the VLCC board, occasions, local events, latest news and much more!

### OUR 1st Anniversary Dinner!

A celebration of the Victorian Lebanese Community Council (VLCC) first year anniversary took place at the Brunswick Lebanese Bar and Grill, Mezza on the 17<sup>th</sup> of October. Over the last year, the VLCC has made significant advances, with remarkable community support, rapidly growing membership and collaborations with several other community and government organisations. From its well received launch which introduced this ambitious organisation and its goals to the community, begin the first steps towards realising these goals.

While basking in the ambiance of fellow friends, the evening also displayed an exhibition which showcased the work of high achievers within the local Lebanese community. Community members were congratulated on their achievements in the areas of the Arts, Academia, Business and Sports. The exhibition presented short biographies and VLCC scripted interviews of the awardees in specialised VLCC booklets.

The night involved Lebanese music, fine dining, a plethora of inspiring guests and an address by the key note speaker Mr Faddi Zouki, the cofounder of the Zouki business chain. The recipients of awards included Najee of the Najee Direct fashion label, Cr Bill Baarini, Ali Abdo of the Australian wrestling Olympian team, Mr Tony Leon CEO of Coles, Bachar Houli of the Essendon Football Club, Dr. Walid Ahmar a well known cardiologist, Maha Sukkar the first veiled Muslim police woman, Ahmed Fahour the CEO of NAB, Sam Mazloum owner of Toto's Pizza, Afifa Saad and Mariam Ahmar.

The recognition and celebration of the evening's selected awardees was a well overdue celebration of our community's outstanding role models. VLCC's first anniversary dinner not only inspired, but also provided an opportunity for the Lebanese community to come together and share in what was a very special night.



Comments to VLCC's Editor: [csoufan@vlcc.com.au](mailto:csoufan@vlcc.com.au)  
Website: [www.vlcc.com.au](http://www.vlcc.com.au)

# Victorian Lebanese Community Council Inc.

مجلس الجالية اللبنانية في فيكتوريا

VLCC GAZETTE



## Important Meetings & Activities

1) VLCC met with The Hon. Laurie Ferguson, Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services on 27 October, 2008. Michael Kheirallah (Chairperson) and Vivian Chemali (Deputy Chairperson) introduced the VLCC to the Parliamentary Secretary and spoke about future projects and funding possibilities.

The Parliamentary Secretary was impressed that the VLCC is a non-sectarian organisation, and encouraged VLCC's goals and aim to promote a cohesive society. He indicated willingness to recommend his department to work more closely with the VLCC in the future.



2) VLCC has also been concerned about the media coverage of gangs and the connection made to the Lebanese community. To address this, VLCC has written a letter requesting a meeting with key Ministers and Politicians, including the Attorney General, The Youth Minister, The Police Commissioner, Chairperson of Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC), The Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV) and the Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission.



Thus far, VLCC has met with Ms. Marlene Keirouz (MP) and Mr. Nazih El-Asmar who are State Members of Parliament from a Lebanese background, and both the Hon. Mr. James Merlino (the Youth Minister) and Mr. George Lekakis (Chairperson for VMC).

The meeting concluded with expressed interest in ensuring various government departments work more closely with VLCC to follow up on this and other related issues.

3) VLCC also met with members from the Victoria Police to discuss joint project initiatives for 2009. More information will be provided in the next Gazette.

4) Michael and Mr. Tony Charbel also attended the Victoria Police Multifaith dinner. Here, they had the opportunity to meet and congratulate Police Commissioner Christine Nixon.



5) Karim Noura (Education Officer) and Viviane also attended the DIAC End of Year function.

6) Zeinab Fakh (Treasurer) was also interviewed by Iman Riman on SBS and spoke about VLCC's media monitoring, and response to an article inappropriately comparing violence in government housing to violence in Lebanon.

On a final note, VLCC has been busy consulting Lebanese Community Leaders and identifying issues of interest and concern to the Lebanese community, in particular youth and media coverage.

# Victorian Lebanese Community Council Inc.

مجلس الجالية اللبنانية في فكتوريا

## VLCC GAZETTE



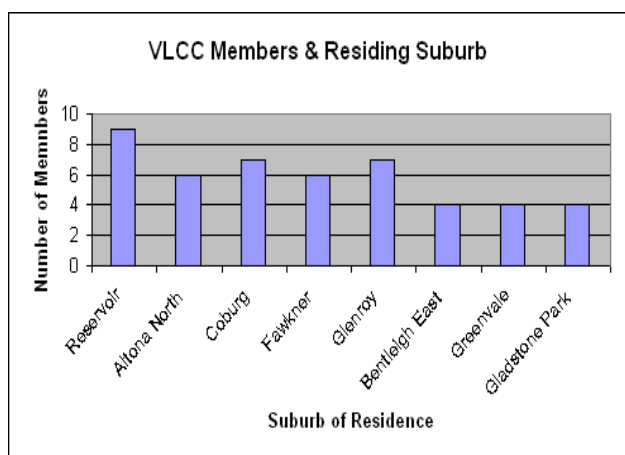
### VLCC's Members

The VLCC is delighted by the support we have received from the community, and take this opportunity to thank all our financial members. Although VLCC is fully aware of the scope of support from the wider Lebanese community, our financial membership has grown from 22 to 95 members, and we look forward to further growth in 2009. Total financial support received in 2008 was \$2,000.00. Thank You to our Members.

To offer a little snap shot, VLCC's members reside in 41 suburbs, and the top 8 suburbs in order of greater number of members are: Reservoir (9), Glenroy and Coburg (7 each), Altona North and Fawkner (6 each), followed by Bentleigh East, Greenvale and Gladstone Park (4 each).

Will these suburbs remain on the top of the list in 2009? Will another suburb become the lead? We will keep you updated in the next gazette, and send members from our lead suburb a gift of appreciation. Become a member to enter the competition and win!! Organisational and corporate sponsorship also welcomed.

Membership form can be downloaded from VLCC website: [www.vlcc.com.au](http://www.vlcc.com.au) or phone VLCC on 0422 144 739.



### VLCC Grants for 2009

Since establishment in April 2007, VLCC's Secretary/Projects & Grants Coordinator (Carol Makhoul) has written 8 grants, and VLCC has received a total of \$9,400.00.

The financial assistance received has covered: 1) small equipment purchases for operation of service delivery; 2) the creation and ongoing maintenance of VLCC website; 3) specific activities for VLCC's launch in October 2007, and; 4) the publication of the Lebanese community achievers booklet, including creation of exhibition display for VLCC's Anniversary Dinner celebration in October 2008.

The VLCC would like to express a special thanks to the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) for their financial support in 2008.

### VLCC's Sponsors

VLCC would like to extend a very big THANK YOU to our 13 individual and business sponsors for their generous support and contribution, both financial and in-kind. VLCC would like to say, we would not have been able to achieve what we did without you!! In total, our sponsors have contributed financially an approximate total of \$6,000, not including the in-kind contribution.

VLCC would like to give a special thank you to the following 2008 golden sponsors: Mr. Sam Massoud (Arab Bank); Mr. Sami Mazloum (Toto's Pizza); Mr. Ali Khodr (Advanced Natural); Mr. Amer Denawi (Madina Halal Poultry); Mr. Elias Farah (A1 Lebanese Bakery); Mr. Robert Tawil (Nu Concept Printing); Mr. Mohamad Soufan (Business Broker) & Mr. Jamil Makhoul (Sheikhtaba Pty. Ltd).

# Victorian Lebanese Community Council Inc.

مجلس الجالية اللبنانية في فكتوريا

## VLCC GAZETTE



### Media Coverage

What an excellent job El-Telegraph Newspaper has done in covering VLCC's movements. Over 13 articles were published. The Future Newspaper has also been a great support. Let us not forget the outstanding broadcasting of Mr. Tony Charbel on 3ZZZ, The Voice of Lebanon and Mr. Houssam Chaabo and Ms. Iman Riman from SBS Arabic Radio program. A special thank you is also due to Mr. Ahmed Sobh from Middle East Radio. Indeed, VLCC has been very lucky to have the support of such talented individuals. Thank you for helping VLCC keep the community informed on all we do. We look forward to another year of working closely with you.

### VLCC would like to Congratulate ...

- ◆ Mr. Tony Leon for his recent appointment as CEO for First Choice Liquor.
- ◆ Mr. Bill Baarini for his new role with the Transport Workers Union as General Consel.
- ◆ Mr. Ali Abdo for winning the Victorian Championship in wrestling.
- ◆ Professor Ghassan Hage on the recent launch of his latest book.
- ◆ Mr. Naim Melhem for becoming the Manager of Arab Bank in Victoria.

### The Children's Cancer Centre seeks ...

The Children's Cancer Centre wants to build a library for children and their families to utilise while seeking treatment. To help out, please donate multicultural books and audio books.

Contact: Mary McGowan (03) 9345 4855

### Further information for you ...

- ◆ VLCC has made contact with the Notre Dame University in Beirut (Lebanon) and will be working more closely with the Lebanese Emigration Research Centre (LERC).
- ◆ The Zouki Family Foundation has given an award to the 3 highest VCE achievers from a Lebanese background, and in 2009 will be giving out these awards at VLCC's 2<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary Dinner.
- ◆ Ms. Iman Riman (on her trip to Lebanon) was interviewed by The Future Television Station. Iman spoke about SBS radio station and recent initiatives, and discussed issues relating to racism and media coverage in Australia.

### The Victorian Multicultural Awards for Excellence

Congratulations to Mr. Tony Charbel, Ms. Claire Naffah and Ms. Carol Makhoul for recently (15/12/08) receiving a Multicultural Award for Excellence from the Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC). All three awardees were nominated by the VLCC, in recognition of their hard work and significant contribution, via service delivery, to the Lebanese community. VLCC would like to say Thank You for your commitment and dedication and Congratulations.



The VLCC is proud to nominate deserving members from the community for this award, and will continue to do so in the coming years. In 2007, Ms. Iman Riman (media award), Mr. Karim Noura (education award) and Ms. Viviane Chemali (community services award) were also successfully recognised for this award by the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Congratulations to all our awardees and keep up the great work!

# Victorian Lebanese Community Council Inc.

مجلس الجالية اللبنانية في فكتوريا

VLCC GAZETTE



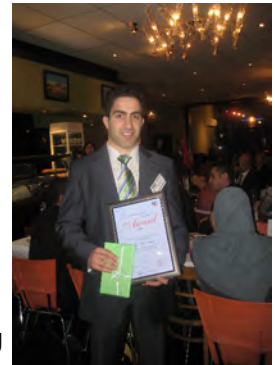
## Research & The Lebanese Community

Since establishment, VLCC has been approached and informed of a few research projects with a specific or partial focus on the Lebanese community. Those to mention in this edition are:

- 1) Dr. Josephine Li (Melbourne University) who is to be congratulated for recently completing her research which sought to better understand how specific pathways in the visual system that carry different types of information to the brain interact with each other in directing visual attention. VLCC will provide further information on the research findings when available.
- 2) Dr. Andre Renzaho (Deakin University) is currently working on a research project titled, Acculturation and its impact on physical and mental health among Arabic migrants. The project aims to research social and health problems that are associated with cultural changes, focusing on physical and mental health, self-esteem, family cohesion, and parent-child relations among Arabic-speaking migrants. For further information, please contact Dr. Renzaho on 0401 807 249.
- 3) A Masters student, Ms. Sarah El-Atm (Melbourne University) is currently conducting a research project titled, Migrant Assimilation and Cultural Preservation in the Lebanese Community of Melbourne. The aim of this study is to examine the concurrent existence of cultural preservation through music and migrant assimilation within the Lebanese community of Melbourne. To participate or if you would like further information, Sarah can be contacted on 0422 974 870.

## ACHIEVER OF THIS EDITION: Q & A WITH Ali Abdo

Three time Olympian Ali Abdo began to wrestle at the age of nine. This sport has been a family affair with his brother Bilal also a promising junior wrestler. Now at the age of twenty seven, Ali has competed in three back to back Olympic Games and is in his final year studying masters in Osteopath.



### Q. How did you get started?

I started wrestling as a nine-year-old under the guidance of my father and long-time coach Sam Parker.

### Q. What was your biggest hurdle and how did you overcome it?

18 months of juggling both my university workload and Olympic dreams. I won't lie, it was hard work and a lot of sacrificing, but with pacing myself, sacrificing many things and family support—I got there!

### Q. Advice to others?

Go After your goal and do not let negative inhabitants get in your way. I know you will make sacrifices but push through it as it'll be the best feeling!

### Q. Who would you like to nominate as a young achiever?

Bachar Houli. He is a true sportsman. He has great talent and I know what he has gone through as a fellow sportsman. I would like to point out that he is a great role model.

# Victorian Lebanese Community Council Inc.

# مجلس الجالية اللبنانية في فكتوريا

## VLCC GAZETTE



### VLCC'S 1st Anniversary Dinner Photos



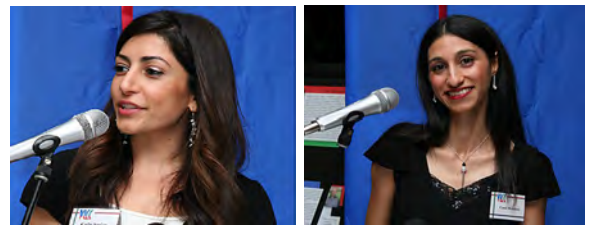
Photo of VLCC Awardees



VLCC Board Members



Fadi Zouki & Michael Kheirallah  
(Guest Speaker & VLCC Chairperson's speech)



Cathy Soufan & Carol Makhoul  
(MCs for the night)



Dr. Trevor Batrouney & Mrs. Mariam Ahmar  
(Awardees with Ms. Marlene Keirouz (State MP))



Dr. Walid Ahmar & Maha Sukkar (Awardees)



VLCC Members & Guests



VLCC Members & Guests