

## UNPAA CONFERENCE/REUNION 27-30/9/2009 ARTICLE FOR UNPAA WEBSITE

The 14<sup>th</sup> United Nations Police Association of Australia (UNPAA) Conference/Reunion was recently held at Crowne Plaza Pelican Waters Golf Resort & Spa, Pelican Waters, Caloundra, from 27-30 September 2009 and from all reports it was voted an exceptionally successful event.

The UNPAA Queensland Branch President, John “Whiskey” Walker, has advised 158 delegates came from all Australian States and Territories, Austria, Thailand and New Zealand for the four day event.

On behalf of the Queensland Branch organizing committee, “Whiskey” offered his thanks to those who made the trek to the beautiful Sunshine Coast, adding the figure would have been much more but, unfortunately, a number of delegates had to cancel because of health problems and other issues.

The conference/reunion delegates had served as peacekeepers in Cyprus with the 1<sup>st</sup> to 38<sup>th</sup> contingents, in East Timor, Iraq, Mozambique, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Rwanda and Solomons, either under the United Nations banner or as members of the International Deployment Group.

Displays over the four days included items from the Australian Federal Police Museum, an Australian Peacekeeping Memorial Project Model, photographic displays and two mannequins (male and female) dressed in UNFICYP and UNMIS uniforms in the Crowne Plaza Lobby and Foyer.

In addition, all Australian State and Territory Police Flags, countries flags of Australia, Afghanistan, Austria, Cyprus, East Timor, Sudan, as well as the United Nations and UNPAA Flags were displayed over the four days.

The conference/reunion got under way on Sunday 27 September 2009 with registrations from 10am – 6pm, together with wine tasting by minor sponsor Winya Wines in the registration area and many friendships were renewed and rekindled during the day.

At 6pm that evening the event started in earnest at Crowne Plaza with a Welcome and Cypriot Meze Dinner and dance group performance. The Meze Dinner and service by Crowne Plaza staff were of a high standard and the delegates soon settled into a very happy and relaxing mood in the lovely surrounding of Crowne Plaza’s Reflections Restaurant and Terrace. Winya Wines complimentary port and souvenir ‘shot’ glasses, bearing the UNPAA Logo, proved very popular with all attendees.

Among those attending were the High Commissioner to Cyprus, His Excellency Yanis Iacovou, Queensland Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson APM and other senior police, National UNPAA State/Territory executive members and their partners, members of the Cypriot Community from Brisbane and 10 Cypriot Youth Dancers who performed a selection of Cypriot dances on the Crowne Plaza Terrace, to the delight of all present.

On Monday morning 28 September the delegates undertook a Sunshine Coast Hinterland Bus tour with the first stop at the Ginger Factory at Yandina where a morning tea of ginger scone, ginger jam and cream with tea/coffee awaited, with time allowed for shopping of ginger products, while some of the young at heart had a train ride through the grounds.

Next was a visit to the picturesque village of Montville in the Blackall Ranges for more shopping/browsing or just a general walkabout, followed by lunch at Tranquil Park Mountain Resort and Irish Pub, Maleny, which overlooks the famous Glasshouse Mountains and surrounding farming areas.

Another high standard meal was served and this was complemented by a very professional entertainer who had a significant number of the delegates dancing/jiving/rocking and rolling to his singing and music.

Monday night was a free night for the delegates and the Tranquil Park dancers/jivers/rock and rollers most probably were glad of this.

Police Remembrance Day on Tuesday 29 September, the day around which the conference/reunion was planned, saw the UNPAA delegates join serving and retired police on the Sunshine Coast in a street march, led by a pipe band and colour party, from King Street, Kings Beach to Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Caloundra where an excellent and moving church and wreath laying service was conducted by Father John Dobson and Queensland Police Chaplain Reverend Ian Todd to a packed audience.

The homily delivered by Reverend Todd was highly acclaimed and a number of delegates requested and were supplied with a copy.

The church service was followed by a quality luncheon at the Caloundra RSL Sunshine Coast Function Centre attended by Deputy Commissioner Kathy Rynders – representing Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson - other senior police officers, AFP Superintendent Mick Travers representing the National Manager of IDG, members of State Parliament and other VIPs.

Tuesday evening was another free evening for the delegates and an opportunity for a number of contingents “get togethers” where many a tale was told (and embellished!)

On Wednesday morning 30 September the Annual General Meeting of UNPAA was held at Crowne Plaza, followed by a Civic/Mayoral Reception at the Events Centre, Caloundra, hosted by Deputy Mayor Tim Dwyer in the absence of Mayor Bob Abbot. The ‘welcome address’ by Deputy Mayor Dwyer was well received and appreciated by those in attendance and again the food was of a high standard.

Wednesday afternoon was free time and at 6.30pm delegates gathered in the Foyer of Pelican Waters Ballroom for pre-dinner drinks and canapés while awaiting the arrival of the Guest Speaker, Her Excellency the Governor of Queensland, Ms Penelope Wensley AO and her husband Mr. Stuart McCosker.

The Governor and other members of the official party were piped into the ballroom by a Queensland Police Piper and the 170 people in attendance enjoyed a first class meal and hospitality, followed by an excellent address by Her Excellency on UN, IDG and other overseas peacekeeping missions by Australian Police. A number of delegates personally congratulated the Governor on her address which was the highlight of a memorable evening.

In addition to Her Excellency and Mr McCosker, other VIP’s at the Formal Dinner hosted by Queensland President John ‘Whiskey’ Walker and his wife Julie, were Queensland Police Minister Neil Roberts and his wife Jenny (representing Premier Anna Bligh), Queensland Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson APM, Assistant Commissioner Graham Rynders of the North Coast Region based in Maroochydore, Commander Brian McDonald, AFP Brisbane Office and representing AFP Commissioner Tony Negus, National UNPAA President Denis Percy and his wife Alex, Sunshine Coast Regional Council Mayor Bob Abbot and Queensland Police Credit Union/QBE representatives, major sponsors of the RSL luncheon on Police Remembrance Day.

The Formal Dinner was the final function of the four day event.

Many complimentary remarks were received by the organizing committee as to the high standard of accommodation, meals, hospitality, service and general friendliness and courtesy of all staff encountered by the delegates, all of which contributed to the success of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary UNPAA National Conference/Reunion on the beautiful Sunshine Coast.

Whiskey hopes you all returned home with happy memories of your visit to the Sunshine Coast and Queensland in general and that what you saw and experienced will motivate you to return

Whiskey has also advised that he has received the following message from UNPAA Northern Territory President Allan Mitchell:

*The next UNPAA Reunion will be in Darwin in 2011 and will take place in a similar timeslot to the Qld Reunion, surrounding National Police Remembrance Day (29 September). The NT Organising Committee will be contacting you all shortly.*