



I AM A
SLOVENIAN TOO

TUDI JAZ SEM
SLOVENEK / SLOVENKA

Compiled by Draga Gelt

Thank you to sponsors:	Office for Slovenians Abroad, Slovenian Association Melbourne, Slovenian Mission, Kew, HASA web page and Draga Gelt OAM
Exhibition Coordinators:	Draga Gelt, Dragica Gomizel and Vivienne Katsoulotos
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I am a Slovenian too - Tudi jaz sem Slovenec/Slovenka

Collection of Essays and Lego entries exhibited at the Exhibition

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO - TUDI JAZ SEM SLOVENEK / SLOVENKA

staged at the Slovenian Association Melbourne, Research, Victoria, on June 22nd 2014

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Melbourne 2014

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Melbourne, 2014

Dedicated
to the Young Generations of Slovenians in Australia

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The Aim of the Exhibition and Competition

by Draga Gelt OAM

Children, youth and adults of second, third and fourth generations of Slovenians in Australia like to feel being part of the Slovenian community. Some more, others less. This Exhibition has given them a chance to express their feelings openly.

The young ones all know of Slovenia, the birth country of their parents and grandparents and they are proud of it. Their respect is expressed in their participation in Slovenian cultural programs: folk dancing, singing, pantomimes, symbolic dancing; sporting activities with other organisations, representing particular Slovenian Association, writing about Slovenia in their daily school work, researching Slovenia on the internet and, of course, enjoying the Slovenian traditional cuisine.

The aim of the essay competition *I am a Slovenian Too* was for the young Slovenians of later generations to express their feelings. Do they feel a Slovenian at heart?

It is always a pleasure to invite 2nd, 3rd and 4th generations of Slovenians to participate in an event. The response is often great and I become quite emotional when I read the various points they like to bring forward. From the very young come warm and hearty responses, displaying so much unconditional love and respect for the country of their grandparents and great grandparents. There is so much honesty in their responses; they take love for Slovenia, its beauty, its culture and its heritage very seriously even at an early age. I could feel their pride, including in my young granddaughter Leah, feel their respect, awe, wonder, their playfulness, the gentle touch and enthusiasm.

That was the reason for the essay competition and the response is so very Slovenian.

The essays are full of ideals, hope, positive emotions and almost naive beliefs, wrapped in sometimes quite simple words and the expression: "Yes, I am a Slovenian too" with wishes for a peaceful future. There is so much faith in the nation that lives under Mt Triglav to which they feel they belong as well!

Even though younger Slovenians in Australia are not so actively involved in Slovenian clubs and church, most of them still want to contribute and are prepared to contribute; they wish to be part of this little Slovenia under the Southern Cross.

They feel Slovenian; they identify with the Slovenian culture, history, literature, customs and take pride in achievements of Slovenians, historic and/or international.

The coordinators wanted to hear from young Slovenians how they feel.

Is there a Slovenian heart beating in pride and joy when Slovenia is winning at international sports events?

Is there hope in their hearts that just and transparent political decisions are made in Slovenia?

Is there great pride in their hearts when scientific/art/historical achievements of Slovenians are recognised by the world?

Let's find out.



The Coordinators: Dragica Gomizel, Draga Gelt and Vivienne Katsoulotos

A handwritten signature in blue ink, located in the bottom right corner of the page. The signature is stylized and appears to be 'D. Gelt'.

Acknowledgements

We, the Coordinators of the Exhibition of Essays and Lego exhibits, Draga Gelt, Dragica Gomizel and Vivienne Katsoulotos wish to thank

all participants for the valuable contributions: for all the essays and Lego exhibits;

the judges Mrs Magda Pišotek and Mr Andrej Potočnik for valuable input and judging;

to Office for Slovenians Abroad (Urad za Slovence po svetu Republike Slovenije) for approving the project and for a partial financial assistance, so we were able to

a. stage the exhibition and

b. purchase many book prizes for essay competition winners and *Nano Blocks* for Lego competition winners;

to HASA web pages for sponsoring the printing of some essays for the exhibition displays;

to Draga Gelt for sponsoring 6 book prizes;

to Slovenian Mission Kew, Melbourne, for the gift of a book of poems by Fr Basil Valentin OFM MBE as a prize for Slovenian essay;

to the President of Slovenian Association Melbourne, Mrs Frances Urbas Johnson for the welcoming speech at the exhibition opening and help with the distributing the prizes and

to Slovenian Association Melbourne for the venue for the exhibition - the dining room, as well as technical assistance by Julija Čampelj, Alek Kodila and Janko Tegelj;

to Magda Pišotek for proof reading and Metka Čuk for literary advice.

Thank you as well to all the Slovenian/Australian parents for encouraging the children and grandchildren to participate.

With appreciation

the Exhibition Coordinators and Event organisers: Draga, Dragica and Vivienne

Foreword

by Frances Urbas-Johnson, President of Slovenian Association Melbourne 2012 to 2014



I am Slovenian too!

It was a privilege and a pleasure to serve as President during the time our Association held the 'I am Slovenian Too!' essay competition and Lego exhibition, as part of the cultural festivities of Slovenian Independence Day, on Sunday 22nd June 2014.

The numerous essays from around Australia were truly special, and all offered wonderful insights of what it means to be Slovenian, by the authors, most of who live here in Australia. Some younger, some older, but all Slovenian at heart.

Many young ones have been to Slovenia with parents or grandparents, and wrote about their experiences. Many wrote about their involvement in the Slovenian community here in Australia, which highlights to me that although we are small in numbers, many people get involved and put their heart and soul into helping our traditions carry on for future generations.

I confess that I am quite fond of Lego, and was impressed at the exceptional pieces created for the exhibition. The Slovenian themed pieces were something I had never seen before and were incredibly creative and thoughtfully constructed.

We are indeed fortunate to live in a country that celebrates multiculturalism, giving us opportunities to remember our Slovenian heritage. This event gave us the chance to share amazing experiences and get to know members of our community on a more personal level.

Congratulations to Mrs Draga Gelt OAM and her team: Mrs Dragica Gomizelj, Mrs Vivien Katsoulatos and Mrs Anica Kodila, for organising a magnificent event. Mrs Draga Gelt OAM has also worked tirelessly to compile this e-book, a lovely souvenir of the event.

Warm thanks to our judges on the day, Mrs Magda Pišotek and Mr Andrew Potočnik, who had the difficult task of picking the winning entries.

I congratulate all the participants of our community who submitted entries; reading the essays and viewing the Lego exhibits gave all visitors much enjoyment on the day.

We hope this e-book brings you further enjoyment and may you continue to be Slovenian at heart!

Warm regards,

Introduction to Essays' Competition

by Mrs Magda Pišotek, the essays' Judge



It was a pleasure and an honour to be asked to judge the essays "*I am a Slovenian too*". First of all I wish to express my congratulations to Mrs Draga Gelt OAM to put forward such an idea and give young people and adults an opportunity to write and express their feelings on this special occasion of 23 years of Slovenian Independence.

On reading all the essays from the entrants ranging from 7 years to adults I was very impressed and amazed. There was a common thread interwoven throughout the essays. The common thread was traditions, food, music, keeping up Slovenian culture, special places, involvement today, their pride and family history and even the Prayer "Sveti Angel" was mentioned.

The essays written in the Slovenian language greatly impressed me as to how fluently they were written and grammatically correct.

I felt that the essays reflected the pride of each entrant and their writings were from the heart. I was particularly impressed by the young people of 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation Slovenian so proudly expressed why they felt they were Slovenian too!

The younger writers even included photos, which so visually made their point. So, how was I to judge these wonderful pieces of work each receiving such merit and acknowledgement. The second dilemma I had was that I knew so many of the writers and how to judge them when even my grandchildren entered! (So I had to consult in order to be fair to all.)
How did I judge?

When you write an essay it is like preparing a hamburger!
Your Introduction to the story is like the base of the hamburger and then you start filling it with all sort of goodies. The amount of goodies that you fill the hamburger with, the meaty part, depends on its delicious taste and the different combinations. So too your story needs to be enticing, tasty and delicious and you want to get into it.
Then, there is the final part, the top part that you place on the hamburger, that in turn is like the climax of your story and the ending. Sometimes leaving the reader satisfied, amazed with its meaty parts, was it interesting enough, how was it presented, grammatically correct or in awe of the contents or even giving the reader some food for thought!
Let me congratulate all the participants on the sensational effort that had been put into the essays.
You all need to know that you can be very proud of your endeavour that you put into your writings.

The youngest group 5 - 7 Years

The youngest writers were able to identify their heritage, traditional food, Slovenian words, famous places they knew about or even had the opportunity to visit when travelling to Slovenia. The writers also incorporated into their essays some photos and so visually their writings became alive.

Category 5years -7years

1st Prize

Leah Gelt for her amazing descriptive story of how she felt about being a Slovenian.

2nd Prize

Sienna Pisotek who in her way described her points and visually depicted her feelings of being a Slovenian too.

Category 8 years to 12 years

They too expressed their thoughts of how proud they are of their heritage, their participation in the Slovenian Community and the interaction they have with other Slovenian friends, especially when they meet at the different Slovenian festivals. Travelling to Slovenia and experiencing the beautiful country its people, food, music and the culture.

1st Prize

Alex Pišotek wrote about his heritage, food and his wonderful experiences when he had the opportunity to travel to Slovenia and expressed his pride of being an Australian - Slovenian!

2nd Prize

Evie Johnston described about being part of the Slovenian community, learning the language participating in Slovenian music, dancing, singing and cultural celebrations.

3rd Prize

Mia Pišotek depicted her experiences of a Slovenian heritage and proud when she wears her national costume.

Commendable Award

Daniel Bogovič who marked out his experiences in belonging to a Slovenian community.

Encouragement Award.

Thomas Scott who inscribed his thoughts of how beautiful is Slovenia with its architectural buildings , delicious food and amazing culture.

Category 13 years - 17 years

In this category the writers' essays became far more descriptive and detailed. Their writings proudly depicted their relationships with their grandparents, the influence of food, culture and the love of their grandparents' homeland Slovenia with all its beauty.

13 years - 17years

1st Prize

Jeremy Ryff described his wonderful experiences when he travelled to Slovenia and how he was in awe of this beautiful country and his connections to this part of the world.

2nd Prize

Julia Markič -Smith a third generation Slovenian depicted her pride in being of such a rich heritage.

3rd Prize

Lucas Hliš vividly wrote about his exposure to Slovenian language, music, food and Slovenian community in Australia.

Encouragement Award

Natasha Zagar fondly writes about her family's influence on her and how she is proud of her Slovenian heritage.

Adult Category

In the adult section the writers wrote with great passion and pride of being a Slovenian too. Their detailed essays depicted a strong sense of heritage and its perseverance of language culture, food and community.

Category 18 years - adult

1st Prize

Zalika Rizmal expressive language, pointed out her views of being between identities. Her deep connections and how her life had been influenced by her Australian and Slovenian heritage.

2nd Prize

Vivien Boosz Falež her essay gave the reader food for thought.

3rd Prize

Andrej Potočnik who looked at identity and how it is defined and what makes us Slovenian. Andrew Potocnik in his writings analysed what makes one a "Slovenian"? He portrayed many deep views and meanings which left the reader with food for thought.

Highly Commendable:

Lenti Lenko OAM who so passionately wrote about the spirit of being Slovenian and his firm beliefs. He ends his essay with "Ponosen sem, da sem Avstralski Slovenec"

Honourable mention

Rachel Lenko who described how she felt welcomed, accepted into the Slovenian Community and a part of being a Slovenian too. I was so impressed when Rachel Lenko who is married to Lenti Lenko wrote her feelings and impressions why she too feels being a Slovenian!

Commendable prizes to:-

Sandra Krnel who wrote about her family and her involvement in the Slovenian Community which emphasized her passion for being a Slovenian.

Frances Ryff put in her writing her continual growth as a "Slovenian" and recognising the Slovenian culture, history with its traditions. This to be retained and passed onto future generations.

Megan Lowe noted about the Slovenian traditions, music and culture as a part of her way of life.

Encouragement Award

Ashleigh Ryff noted her yearly traditions of preparing the traditional food at Easter and Christmas. Having contact with family in Slovenia and being a part of them. Ashleigh described the richness of the country and its language.

Slovenian entries

Silvia Josephine Žele for her Slovenian entry

Mentions in her essay how rich she is of her cultural background. With modern day technology she feels she is part of the global communication, which enables this connection between Slovenia and Australia.

I wish to thank and acknowledge all the non winners for their enthusiastic participation, passionate and creative writings, their work, efforts and personal thoughts in what they considered why they are Slovenian too!

Anna Tegelj (Mandel) involved in the band "Rdeči cvet" expressed her love for Slovenia, its culture and language which she hoped to instil in her children this love and pride.

Danijela Hliš who lives in Tasmania described living in a totally multicultural family and society and invited the readers to find out about their heritage and to take a chance to learn the Slovenian language.

Eric Gelt strongly encouraged the reader not to lose touch with Slovenian heritage. His description of the beautiful places he had the opportunity to visit when he took his family for a holiday. The Slovenian food rated highly in his essay.

Eddie Štolfa wrote two essays, one in the Slovenian language and the other in English. He wrote about his involvement in the various cultural presentations, attending Slovenian classes to learn the language and was an active member of the youth group. Eddie proudly remembered his grandmother Marcela Bole a well known poet within the Slovenian Community. His parents Josef and Daniella Štolfa and their huge involvement, dedication and contribution to the Slovenian Association Melbourne. Eddie is proud to have finally become a Slovenian citizen.

Erin Bole a 3rd generation Slovenian proudly described her family, heritage and the courageousness of grandparents and what families had to endure during the war and their migration. Erin is a very proud Slovenian!

Katarina Vrisk passionately portrayed her visits back to Slovenia. In 2013 she and her 10 year old son went for their visit and with awe they both felt a sense of pride that they are Slovenian too!

Tatjana Mohar arrived in Australia at the age of one. She feels that connection to Slovenia because of her love for music, dancing, food and its culture.

Lydia Markič vividly composed her essay and depicted her participation in the various cultural presentations, the folk dancing and modern dances she fondly remembers. Lydia's parents Ann and Lojze Markič dedicated, committed and highly involved members of the Slovenian Association Melbourne Club. Lydia proudly expresses her thanks to her parents for her Slovenian heritage.

Belinda Stopar passionately described her trips to Slovenia and how it made her feel, the connections she experienced with the beautiful Slovenia and its people.

Alannah Čušin a 3rd generation Slovenian who avidly wrote about her family and the visits to Slovenia while continuing to practise the Slovenian language as well as to master the family recipe of the famous "potica" cake.

Silvia Josephine Žele depicted colourfully her story of being raised in the Slovenian Australian community in the early 1960's and 1970's remembering the many cultural activities, the food, the making of her national costume a highlight with fond memories. Silvia included in her essay photos depicting those fond recollections.

Julija Čampelj vibrantly described her family and their involvement in the Slovenian community. Her parents instilled in her the love of music, language and Slovenian culture. Julia, President of the Slovenian Association Melbourne strongly emphasized that she has a sense of pride about her heritage.

Anka Makovec wrote her essay in Slovenian, describing her thoughts of the last 50 years in a country down under. Living in Tasmania, she is proud of her heritage.

Once again many thanks for your valuable contributions and let us remember that "maintaining one's culture, values and traditions is beyond price".

A special mention and with gratitude to **Adrian Vatovec** from Adelaide who did not enter the competition but agreed to have it published in the e Book.

Adrian Vatovec wrote a historic account of migrants and their stay in Bonegilla, which was the largest migrant reception, between the 1940's to 1970's.

Adrian described the meaning of the word Bonegilla and then he ties it all to an emotional poem/ song "Two Streams" with symbolism and representation of the Slovenian and the Australian way of life. It is a vivid portrayal of two streams which is flowing as blood through his veins.

Congratulations to all the participants on such outstanding essays, giving the readers such pleasure and delight in your stories.

The role of a writer is not to say what we all can say, but what we are unable to say. ~Anais Nin

And As William Wordsworth said

"Fill your paper with the breathings of your heart." ~

I thank all the writers who so generously expressed their feelings and thoughts with their heart and with a spirit of being a Slovenian too!

M. Psotek

Introduction to Lego Competition

by Andrej Potočnik, the Lego entries Judge

Lego Competition

I begin by firstly congratulating all who rose to the challenge of the 'Lego Competition'. The world of building blocks has certainly changed since I used them in my childhood. I didn't have a Lego set; however, the building blocks I did have gave me the opportunity to convert concepts conjured in my juvenile mind into three dimensional extensions of what was possible by locking together those little pegs and receptacles hidden underneath, leading to a world of fantasy only I could truly understand. Almost anything was possible, buildings that could never be constructed in real life, objects that existed only in my mind, and abstract constructions that you could only understand if you squinted and used your imagination... the wonders of a child's mind!

Lego has now become a lot more sophisticated with kits that enable inquisitive young minds to piece together creatures that walk, thanks to the implementation of robotics, cars that drive and can be steered via rack and pinion systems, just like real cars. Where will the imagination of Lego designers head next? Will we have 'smart' Lego kits with wireless technology controlled by a mobile phone? Let's wait and see, and then we'll find just how creative minds will adapt their imagined designs to exploit possibilities available to them...

With all the wonders of current technology and sophistication Lego kits bring to this world presently, I was highly impressed with the imagination of the youngest age group who presented works for this exhibition, those of up to seven years of age. These are people whose world is filled with wild imagination, devoid of peer-group pressure and doctrines of what you can and can't do. The pieces these creators fashioned show several qualities: the ability to work to a theme, design an overall scene sympathetic to their theme, and incorporate quirks that bring a smile to your face once you've noticed them, sometimes hidden behind other features.

On the other end of the scale there were works created from kits that only the most generous 'Father Christmas' could bring once a year, or was it a very caring grand parent who was possibly living out their childhood dream?

The adult category proved that no-one is ever too old to have a go, and expose their inner creativity, even if it's within a child's domain. Who cares? Creativity is good for one's soul, it makes us feel good about ourselves, and isn't that an element of life we are distancing ourselves from?

The Lego competition highlighted how imaginative minds can convert plastic building blocks into objects that defy anything we'd ever imagined they could be adapted to.

Congratulations to all who participated, and let's hope this exhibition has inspired others to explore their building imaginations, ready to bring their ideas to fruition in another exhibition!

Melbourne, June 30, 2014



I was very impressed by the exhibition held at SAM, and was pleased to have been involved and help out on the day. I was particularly impressed by the numerous "*I am a Slovenian Too*" essays. It was lovely to learn about the experiences of many authors who grew up in Australia at the same time as myself. I laughed at the many similarities and experiences I shared with these writers. I have fond memories of the club in particular, having spent much of my younger teenage years there every Sunday afternoon!!

My mother has always been involved with the club and I have many memories of phone calls from fellow families asking for tickets to a dance, or organising family groups for Sunday duty at the club.

Now I have my own family, and I was happy that the club provided an opportunity for young Lego enthusiasts like my son, to show their handiwork.

The many exhibits showed off the talents of our young builders, and I marvelled at their skill level. Thank you to all the contributors, and to Draga Gelt, who as always, organised a great exhibition.

Vivienne Katsoulotos, coordinator

***Enjoy.
We did.***



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Leah Mae Gelt

Age
Starost

7

Town
Mesto

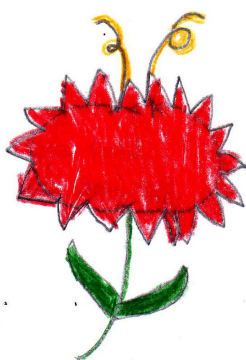
Elwood, Victoria



First Prize

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO - TUDI JAZ SEM SLOVENKA

My Daddy was born in Australia, my babi was born in Slovenia.
 My granddad Joseph was born in Slovenia.
 My Mummy was born in Australia too.
 My Nanna was born in Czech Republic.
 My Pop was born in Holland.



I have been to Slovenia.
 I was two and a half years old.
 I have many souvenirs from Slovenia.
 I have a cowbell with flowers, a big green dragon, basketball top, Slovenian basket balls, magnet doll in national costume.

We go with Mummy and Daddy to Slovenian club. We listen to Slovenian music.
 We play on the monkey bars.
 My brother Sebastian plays too.
 I love going to Slovenian club.
 Sebastian and I play with other Slovenian children.
 We love helping with the raffle.
 I love *potica*. I like Slovenian soup. I love Slovenian *gibanica*.

I know some Slovenian words:
 Lahko noč! Dober dan! Ena, dve, tri, štiri, pet, šest, sedem, osem, devet, deset.
 I know colours: roza, plava, rdeča, bela, črna, oranžna.
 I know some other words:
 Moje ime je Leah.
 Leva roka, desna roka, leva noga, desna noga, nos, lase, teta, ata, mama, brat, babica, babi, torta, kapa, to sem jaz, dan, noč, hiša, moja soba, miza, banana, limona, ananas.

I have Slovenian books and DVDs.
 I like watching the stories.
 I like my Slovenian Memory game with Lake Bled, Lipica horses and bears.

I know the capital of Slovenia – Ljubljana.
 I've made the dragon of Ljubljana.
 It can wag it's tail.

My favourite place in Slovenia is Lake Bled.

I am a Slovenian too!



Pesem za vilo - Song for a Fairy



Memory Game



Doll in national costume of Gorenjska



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Sienna Pišotek

Age
Starost

6

Town
Mesto

Park Orchards, Victoria



Second Prize



Why I am a Slovenian!



I feel that I am Slovenian because....
 both my parents are of Slovenian parents.
 They teach me words so I can learn Slovenian.
 Words that I know in Slovenian are lahko noč,
 dober tek, dober dan and I can say *Sveti Angel*
 prayer.
 I say this prayer at night asking my guardian
 angel to look after me.
 I also enjoy going to the Slovenian Club at
 Eltham when there are festivals and St Nicholas
 day.
 I have also been to Slovenia in 2010 with my
 family. It was so much fun and I loved it.
 We did so much and saw beautiful places like
 Lake Bohinj.



I also like to wear my national costume of Slovenia because it makes me feel proud.

...and that is why I think I'm Slovenian!



In Slovenia we also went to the soccer to see the Socceroos play Slovenia. I loved it and I waved the Australian and the Slovenian flags. I did not mind who won.



Maks Pišotek receiving Sienna's, Mia's and Alex's prizes



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Alex Pišotek

Age
Starost

10

Town
Mesto

Park Orchards, Victoria



First Prize



Why I am a Slovenian too!



I feel that I am a Slovenian because....
 ...both sides of my family have Slovenian background.
 ...mum and dad are born in Australia and my grandparents were born in Slovenia except for my pop who was born in Argentina. My Great Grand Mothers and Fathers were also born in Slovenia. My family has a long line of Slovenians, already four generations.
 ...I am use to eating Slovenian food because of my oma, opa, gamma and pop. I love to eat potatoes, *potica*, *schnitzels*, vanilla *kifli*, Slovenian biscuits, pancake soup (*palačinkova juha*) and other Slovenian food.

While in Slovenia, the family had the opportunity to go to watch the soccer and see Socceroos take on Slovenia. What luck!



It was a great experience for me even though the family got a few looks because we were wearing both Australian and Slovenian outfits ! I felt proud to be an Australian Slovenian amongst all the Slovenians! there was a great crowd, not many Australians, but a big wave of green and white. ...and that is why I think I am Slovenian!



...I went to Slovenia in 2010 with my family. I loved it and I would like to go there again. I saw many beautiful places like Postojnska Jama, Bled, Ljubljana (the capital of Slovenia), Maribor, Novo mesto and other great places which is filled with lots of history and beauty.





Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Evie Johnson

Age
Starost

9

Town
Mesto

Templestowe, Victoria



Second Prize

I am Slovenian too!

My name is Evie Johnson and I am 9 years of age.

My Slovenian heritage comes from my mum's side of the family. Both her parents were born in Slovenia, but she was born in Australia.

I participate in the Slovenian community by learning the Slovenian language, participating in Slovenian celebrations and festivals.

Being Slovenian makes me feel proud, I enjoy making friends from Slovenian school, I enjoy participating in Slovenian music, dance, singing, culture & celebrations and festivals.

I enjoy and am proud of being Slovenian.



Evie receiving the prize



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Mia Pišotek

Age
Starost

8

Town
Mesto

Park Orchards, Victoria



Third Prize

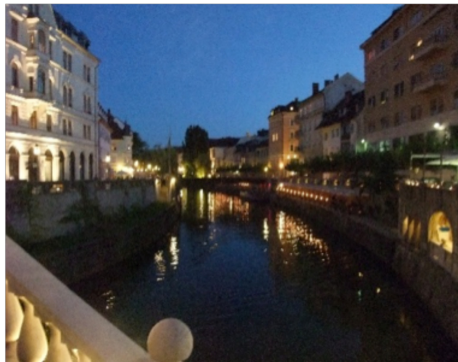


Why I am a Slovenian!



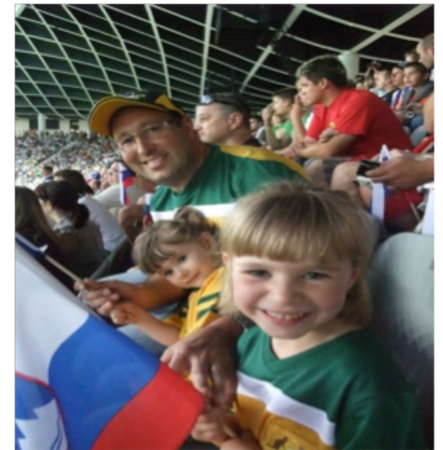
I feel that I am Slovenian because....
...both sides of my family have Slovenian background.
...mum and dad are born in Australia but my grandparents were born in Slovenia except for my pop who was born in Argentina. Their parents were all born in Slovenia.
...In 2010 I went to Slovenia for the first time.

It was a beautiful place and we did lots of sight seeing.

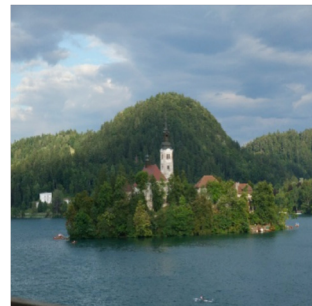


The best was when my family saw the soccer to see the Socceroos play Slovenia in the newly built Stadium in Ljubljana. It was great night being an Australian but also being of Slovenian heritage. It was a great experience for all of us and our family.

I felt Slovenian!



My favourite places were Postojnska Jama, swimming in Lake Bled and walking the streets at night in Ljubljana. There was so much to do and see.





Name & Surname
Ime in priimek
Age
Starost
Town
Mesto

Daniel Bogovič

8

Templestowe

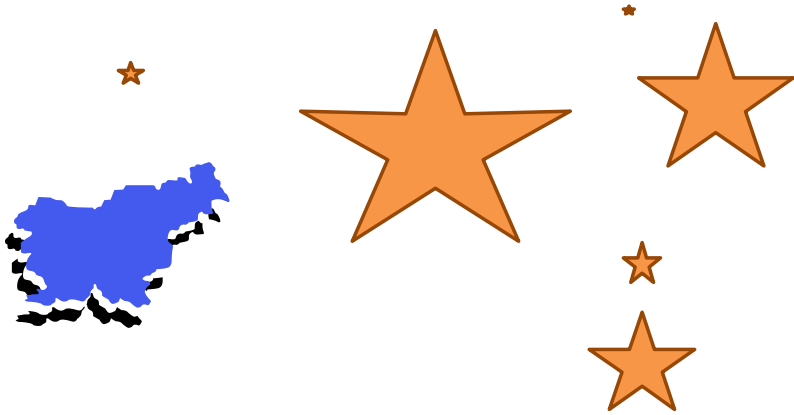
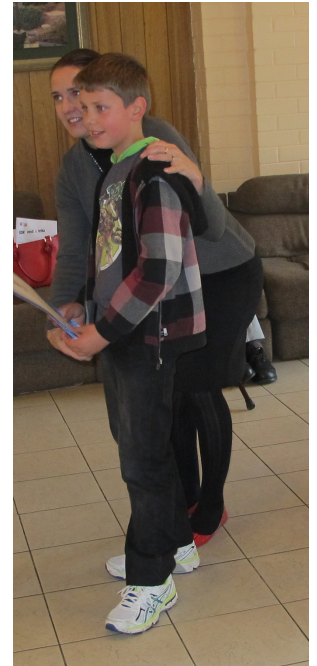


Commendable

I AM SLOVENIAN TOO

DANIEL BOGOVIC, 8 YEARS OLD, GRADE 3

Slovenia is a nice place and it is even next to Italy. I am Slovenian. My background is Slovenian. My grandpas and nannas were born in Slovenia. I have a yellow house that is in Slovenia. I like dancing and singing in sola. I dance with my cousin and I have performed in lots of places; Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Geelong and Melbourne. I dance, sing and perform plays at concerts sometimes. I went to dance at a wedding once. I like going to SDM club. I was born in Australia. I have been to Slovenia once. I went to Slovenian camp for 1 week. It was fun.

Daniel Receiving the prize



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek
Age
Starost
Town
Mesto

Thomas Scott

11

Oakleigh



Encouragement Award

Why I am Slovenian too

I feel Slovenian too because of these reasons:

1. I enjoy their food. When I went for a meal there it was great because the quality of food was 4-5 stars. It was the best food ever.
2. The place looks so lush and green, so beautiful, and it has really nice architectural buildings.
3. On my mum's side, both grandparents are Slovenian so I also hear stories from them about their culture.

I conclude that's why I am Slovenian too.

by Thomas Scott, 11, Oakleigh, Victoria





Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Jeremy Ryff

Age
Starost

16

Town
Mesto

Mooroolbark



First Prize

I'm a Slovenian too

I was born in Australia but my nanna and grandad were born in Slovenia. My nanna was born in the village Dobrova which is near Ljubljana. My grandad was born in Velika Polana.

In 2009, when I was in grade 6, my family and I went back to these places for my grandad 1st year anniversary of his death.

Dobrova is a small village and all people know each other. In Dobrova we saw my great grandparents' grave, as well as in Velika Polana. The cemeteries were very lit up with candles and were decorated with lots of flowers.

In the four weeks we saw a lot of different places in Slovenia, we saw Mt Triglav from a distance, which is the highest mountain in Slovenia. We also went to Lake Bled; the water was crystal clear, you could see the ground on the bottom and you could also see the big fish. Lake Bled is World Heritage listed location.

One of my favourite things in Slovenia was doing the white water rafting on Soča River, where the water was crystal clear and you could drink it.

Postojna Caves were a great location to see, another World Heritage location, was very impressive because of all the stalactites and stalagmites. They looked like smooth crystals. The Slovenia people were, and are very nice to us, welcoming us all the time and everywhere. They also forced us to eat more food, even when we were already full and couldn't eat anymore.

In Australia, my Mum and Nanna keep the Slovenian Easter tradition well alive. Every year Nanna takes Easter foods to church for blessing and than we have all that lovely food: *potica*, ham, freshly grated horseradish and Easter eggs (real ones). We colour Easter eggs at home as well. My Mum makes beautiful *potica* (Nanna taught her).

I have a lot of relatives over in Slovenia; I have met most of them, and maybe, in the future, I would love going back there to see them all again, and to see more of Slovenia.

But if I do go back I would like to go to different parts of Europe as well. I like the history of Slovenia, and history and architecture of European towns. I liked very much Postojnski grad and its dark past – very interesting. I like all these things about Slovenia.

Does all this love for Slovenian people, history and the country make me a Slovenian?
Yes, I think so.

I am proud of being an Australian and a Slovenian as well!



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Julia Markič Smith

Age
Starost

13

Town
Mesto

Croydon



Second Prize

I am Slovenian too

Being third generation Slovenian, I am fortunate to have Slovenian in my blood and in my family's background. It has brought up many opportunities for me of which I'm forever appreciative for.

A focus was travelling to Slovenia in 2010 with my grandparents, my auntie, my little cousin, my two brothers and my mum.

After hearing motivating stories about my grandparents' childhoods, of which were limitless, I was able to really experience the places where they grew up. The same stories were retold, the only difference was that I was able to see an image in my head of the whole scene - the location and the atmosphere. This reflected on me in so many ways, to compare their childhood to this generation's; it is a vast difference.

We visited a lot of different sights - from castles, to caves, to rivers to just simply the glorious mountainous terrains.

I learnt a whole different way of living whilst staying there. For instance, they drove on the opposite sides of the road, everybody has a lot more home produce, the children put more effort into working around the house and everybody has to be absolutely spotless- just a dirty speck on their clothes would have to be washed off straight away. Everyone is proud of the way they live and always pleased to have everything looked after.

Three years later, I was even more blessed to be given a second chance to revisit my relatives with my grandparents; this time having an improved understanding of the language and being more mature and more grateful for the



Lojze Markič receiving Julia Markič's prize

special opportunity. But the surprise came with a downside; I had to leave behind my mum for four weeks.

Unlike my earlier visit, I spent more time in the village and hanging out with my friends rather than visiting all the amazing sites.

Both of these trips were the main highlights of being part Slovenian.

A reason why being Slovenian is important to me, is that not many others know of Slovenia, and what they may know is often very little. I enjoy sharing my knowledge of Slovenia with my classmates and friends. I feel pleased when I am able to teach others about my family background and culture and my grandparents' Slovenian traditions that we have kept going in our family.

I have some early memories from when I was younger and I started doing various little roles such as dressing in the national costume for the Slovenian club. I can remember having a picture of me in the costume being published in the local



Julia Markič Smith *continued*

newspaper. Since then, I have volunteered (or should I say that my grandma volunteered me) to be part of other cultural programs, doing readings and carrying up important symbols.

Since I was quite young, I've always understood bits of Slovenian. In about grade 4, I became more determined to learn the language (mostly

because I would be visiting the country really soon). I learnt most of what I know now while I was in Slovenia, listening to Slovenian for four weeks straight everywhere I went. I'm really proud that I can have (brief) conversations in Slovenian and I can understand some of what others who speak it are saying.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Lucas Hliš

Age
Starost

13

Town
Mesto

Hobart, Tasmania



Third Prize

DOBER DAN, IME MI JE LUCAS HLIŠ.

I am second generation Slovenian/Australian I was born in Hobart on the 30/01/2001. I was taught Slovenian when I was a baby it was my first language. As I started primary school I was speaking more and more English. I can no longer speak fluent Slovenian but I can still slightly understand it. The main reason why my parents wanted me to learn Slovenian was so I could communicate with my grandparents.

I love Slovenian food such as *Strudel*, *potica*, and lots of other foods. I have been to Slovenia once and that was when I was 2 years old. I can't remember anything from that experience but I wish to go again. My aunt Marina who lives in Queensland is extremely good at baking Slovenian cakes and I always am the one that tests them. My mum can also put on quite a feast. I still remember when she cooked a long table lunch with Slovenian food.

I like some Slovenian music and culture I find it very interesting. I have been to one big Slovenian mass in Melbourne in mid-2011 with my aunt and some other Slovenians from Hobart. My dad is great at playing Slovenian music on the keyboard and my aunts love dancing to it.

My whole family except for myself was born in Slovenia. I often get sent movies from Slovenia, such as *Kekec*, *Babica gre na dopust* etc. We have regular Slovenian gatherings with Slovenians from all over Tasmania. I have had numerous meetings with the well-known Slovenian conductor Mr Marko Letonja who just happens to be the conductor of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra.

My auntie Danijela and Marko both say that it is a whole heap better to have two cultures and two languages than to have millions of dollars in the bank. I am not as such proud to be Slovenian or Australian but just to be a good human being is fine for me. My extended family, we are from Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Russia, Australian, France, England, New Zealand, and Germany as well. We think it is important to be multicultural.



If my family try to talk to me in Slovenian I sometimes can reply and sometimes I can't because I don't remember how - this can often feel really awkward. When I go back to Slovenia I would like to learn again.

I know that Slovenia is now an independent country. I also know some traditions such as *Miklavž* and *Pust*.

My participation in cultural events is - I play violin and piano and also play violin in the Tasmanian Youth Orchestra.

In Slovenia I have cousins and an uncle and an aunt: Blaz, and wife Klavdija, and children Gasper and Spela, and I think it would be good to be able to speak with them.

I know that Slovenians are excellent skiers and soccer players and they did us proud in the Olympics.

I think that the whole reason we are making this essay is that everyone Slovenian/Australian can show their point of view on a worldwide spread internet web page for all to share.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Natasha Žagar

Age
Starost

16

Town
Mesto

Canberra, ACT



Encouragement Award

My name is Natasha Žagar. I am 16 years old.

My father was born in Cooma but his parents came from Slovenia in 1963. When I was a baby my Slovenian grandfather-Joze Zagar-Poppy-shortened my name into Nasha because Nasha means Ours in Slovenian.

I enjoy visiting my grandparents in the school holidays.

My mother and her parents were born in Australia.

I have only been to Slovenia once and that was when I was about 5 years old so I don't really remember much about it. I do not have many souvenirs from Slovenia. The only souvenir I have is a key chain that my grandmother bought me last year when she went overseas.

When I was younger my grandparents would teach my sister Eliza and I Slovenian whenever

they visited us. They would teach us songs and some words. We even sang a couple of Slovenian songs at the concert in Slovenian club. However since then we have not learnt any Slovenian so we cannot speak or read it. My brother Janez does not speak any Slovenian but he has a very Slovenian name.

Whenever we visit my grandmother Cilka Zagar she always cooks us many different kinds of Slovenian food. Such as *strudel* and *Schnitzels*. We love Slovenian food.

I am proud to have Slovenian heritage and I would one day love to learn the language and more about the culture.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Zalika Rizmal

Age
Starost

28

Town
Mesto

Monbulk, Victoria



First Prize

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO FINDING THE ME, IN BETWEEN IDENTITIES

My name is Zalika Rizmal and I am the daughter of two Slovenian immigrants who came to Australia in 1967. Although I was born in Melbourne and have lived in Australia for most of my life, the home I grew up in was most decidedly Slovenian.

For I grew up speaking Slovenian, eating Slovenian food, experiencing and living Slovenian culture through music, poetry, stories, philosophies, rituals, traditions and travel. Throughout my childhood and teens, I visited Slovenia with my parents almost every year. This was an priceless gift. With almost all our family residing in Slovenia, I delighted in the warmth of family belonging and in the adventure of exploring my 'second home'.

At the same time, however, I have formed a deep connection with and attachment to Australia, the country where I have lived most of my years, where I went to school and university, and where I forged many lifelong friendships.

In truth, having roots in two countries can sometimes be difficult and confusing. At times I have felt that I do not 'belong' completely in either country. For me, the solution to this internal conflict has been realising that my identity is the complex product of a transnational upbringing and is inherently multidimensional, multilayered and sophisticated in its complexity. As an example, for me, Australia is more connected with my identity in my outer, external life; with things like my education, career, as well as much of my practical social and civic engagement. Slovenia,

on the other hand, is deeply connected with my internal world: the intimate world of family, community and culture. In fact, my deepest, most emotional feelings arise from a part of me that is profoundly Slovenian.

Ultimately, both my Slovenian and Australian heritage and experiences have greatly influenced my life and who I am today. In reality, though I am of two passports, two lands, two cultures, my personal identity is a product of my experiences in both. This apparent duality, while challenging, is a powerful force, compelling me to actively consider and construct my own identity; merging the "here" and "there" and choosing which parts of my multiple identities to use as inspiration and to define who I am.

I am so very proud of both my countries and I actively seek to promote, embody and seek inspiration from the very best that they have to offer in all fields of life. For example, I am forever impressed and inspired by the many remarkable Slovenian individuals, who push the boundaries and do the impossible. Some of my favorites include Davo Karnicar, Tina Maze, and Martin Strel. These individuals show a spirit and vision that is simply awe-inspiring and makes me extremely proud to be a Slovenian.

I am forever thankful to my Slovenian family for my unconventional life and identity, in particular my parents Vinko and Elica Rizmal: individually and together, the very embodiment of integrity, strength, selflessness, vitality, joy and love.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Vivien Boosz nee Falež

Age
Starost

52

Town
Mesto

Canberra, ACT



Second Prize

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO

It could be a simple statement of fact: I am a Slovenian too; a most ardent confirmation: *I am* a Slovenian too; or even a tentative question posed by an insecure soul: *I*, am a Slovenian *too*?

Perhaps in my life I have used this phrase in many and varied ways, including that of the insecure soul. Being born in another country on the other side of the world could lead to some doubts about identity and ownership – no matter how often or how well one speaks the language of a country far, far away.

Along the “I Feel S-love-nian” path, the strength of my affinity for and my relationship to Slovenia has been varied, complex and ever-emerging. From the moment I was born, my Slovenian identity was imposed on me; as I grew up, I had little interest in or understanding of her complex language, particularly the exceptionally difficult and foreign concept of the dreaded “dual” grammatical number. Performing a poem or song or dance in national costume was filled with mixed emotions, sometimes with pleasure, sometimes, particularly as an awkward teenager, with great embarrassment but always, always, when it came to that hat, the “avba”, with great annoyance.

I would say that it has been due to sheer luck, as well as most generous parents, that I have had the good fortune to travel to Slovenia on several occasions and with each visit, have come to know and love the beauty and variety of the landscape and the richness of the culture and people.

Having recently returned to my hometown of Canberra to be close to my family and specifically my aging parents, I delight in being able to replicate for them, at least to some small degree, the delicious meals my mother made for our family to enjoy when we were growing up. I love serving roast pork which evokes memories of Sunday lunches and feel great satisfaction when we savour delicious “filane paprike” as we did in the old days. This last Easter, I even attempted pinca and potica and hope that with practice, I’ll be able to whip up these well-known and well-loved traditional delicacies and take them to Mass for the blessing.

Two dear friends of mine left Australia a fortnight ago to travel to a conference which is to be held in Prague later this month. They mentioned their desire to hire a mobile home so that they could travel through Europe at their leisure and really enjoy their various destinations. I received an email from one of them the other day and felt enormous joy and pride when I read that, largely because of my past rantings, they had travelled directly to Slovenia as soon as they had picked up their mobile home in Prague.

“Day 3 in Slovenia and we think of you 100 times a day!!! We keep telling people how our friend in Australia is from Slovenia. It almost feels like the Greeks saying, “Do you know my friend in Melbourne?”

“We love being here... We love it so much we are wondering if we should even bother going anywhere else and instead spend our full three weeks here... All we know is we want to see it ALL!!!

“Viv – what are your top 3-5 picks for us to NOT miss in Slovenia?”

Only 3-5 picks?

This is a point in my life when I felt my Slovenian identity particularly strongly and proudly and sent my friends a quick email confirming that, as they had thought, Ljubljana, Lake Bled and the caves are must sees but suggested they must also see Lake Bohinj, Logarska Dolina and on the way back out of that valley, turn right at Radomlje and head towards Kamnik to go up to Velika Planina. I thought that approaching Veršič via Tolmin, Bovec and Trenta would be breathtaking and worthwhile as would heading back down on the other side towards Kranjska Gora where they might stop at Gostilna pri Martinu for a real kranjska klobasa with a view to die for. This road back towards Ljubljana then would afford them the opportunity to stick their feet, very briefly, in the unbelievably crystal clear and unbearably freezing waters of the Soča Riva. If they had time, they should not miss the Sava River as well. And the list could have gone on and on.

I can visualise it all ahead of them and wish that I could be there to proudly show all I know and love about Slovenia and together, we would excitedly discover more about Slovenia and her precious jewels of nature.

I am, indeed, a Slovenian too.

Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Andrej (Andrew) Potočnik

Age
Starost

51

Town
Mesto

Macleod, Victoria



Third Prize

I am a Slovenian too.

Responding to the statement, 'I am Slovenian too', I prefer to turn into a question: Am I a Slovenian? because I'm not sure what makes one a 'Slovenian'.

Is it the pigment of one's skin, the shape of one's eyes, the language/s one speaks, which language one thinks in, the passport one carries or because one or both parents are of Slovenian heritage? And how do you define Slovenian 'heritage' when current Slovenia has come under Austro-Hungarian rule, Italian rule and parts once part of Slovenia's coastline has been taken away by Croatia?

Does the definition come from your name? Are you a 'Slovenian' even if you change your Slovenian name to an Anglo-Saxon version? Does that make you a Slovenian at heart but with an assumed alter-ego?

The question of identity is incredibly difficult to define.

I was born in Australia, the third child born in Australia of Slovenian parents who had already lived here for thirteen years. I have lived in Australia all my life; I speak, read and write fluent Slovenian. I am fiercely proud of my Slovenian heritage –I even find it difficult to distinguish between when I think in Slovenian and English.

My parents were part of the original 1950's Slovenians who began the SDM when it had no location, just whoever was able to accommodate a gathering of friends who had a common background. My parents fled Yugoslavia after my father escaped from a concentration camp, incarcerated by his own people –Slovenians who held different political ideals to his. Australia

offered my father and mother a new life and freedom; with conditions they were grateful for and more than willing to abide by.

The terror of political incarceration made the journey into the unknown a lesser of two very difficult choices –a life and death option in a concentration camp or tearing yourself away from family and friends to life on the other side of the world that you nothing about.

Bonegilla, a bonded time working at Mont Park and establishing a new 'family' of fellow Slovenians, many of whom shared a similar background but were fearful of sharing too much information unless it made its way back to the oppressive Government which could inflict terror on relatives left behind. The choice was difficult, but my parent's generation set about creating a world for us, their offspring that could enjoy the wonders of hard work and freedom this country offered.

And work they did. My parents raised three of us in times that began with hardship which all of Australia went through. I was the last and my brother still tells me I had it good, but Mum and Dad offered him anything they could at the time. Society had changed by the time I had come along, but so had the Slovenian community. Early on Mum and Dad were part of the establishment of the 'Slovensko Drustvo Melbourne', a community of expatriates seeking comfort in the company of fellow country-people, however by the time I came along, they had drifted from the original Association.

I am always curious in my dealings with students I teach to establish connections with those who are of Slovenian background; however, very few have a direct connection to their 'Slovenian' heritage.



Andrej (Andrew) Potočnik *continued*

They do not speak the language and seem to not know little more than where their “nona” came from. This is an Italian term, not ‘stara-mama’, as I was taught to know my grandmother. Even my ‘Asian’ nephews and niece know that much Slovenian.

I return to the question: what makes one a ‘Slovenian’?

I think of students I have taught who claim to be ‘Grik’ who asked whether they were born in Greece replied no, were your parents born in Greece, no, so who was born in Greece? My grandparents. One of these students went on a holiday to Greece and upon return was quizzed by a Vietnamese class-mate about how he described himself in Greece, to which he replied, “Australian”. The guy born in Vietnam then challenged, so really what are you?

I am proud of my Slovenian heritage, but do not abuse the right to have a Slovenian passport, unlike my nephews who have used it to gain freedom to travel and work in the EU, who do not speak a word of Slovenian other than Staramama... They have one quarter Slovenian blood line and in three cases have Asian faces, but they have a Slovenian (EU) passport. In the case of another nephew, his one year old son also has a Slovenian passport. He isn’t able to speak, let alone even utter anything comprehensible to Slovenian!

Am I a Slovenian? I am an Australian equally proud of my parental heritage and the country I live in, a country that offered my parents freedom, a country that shaped me, along with the stories of ‘home’ which I still hear from relatives in Slovenia, Canada, Bosnia and Germany.

These are all places our ‘Slovenian’ family fled to in search of freedom... Deep down inside we share our Slovenian heritage but we are now greater citizens of the world, some of whom struggle to find their individual identity.

There are moments when my mother reminisces and laments of her need to leave her family and flee to a world she knew nothing about, but I tell her that I’m grateful for the world I was able to grow up in. Sure I was devoid of any relatives, but I knew nothing else; however this is the world I live in.

Should we be listening to the Oompah music of the Avseniks, or should we wear the national costume, or does it come down to a ‘nik’ in a name, are we Slovenian because we live in the south of Austria? The question of what it is to be a Slovenian is too difficult to unravel, just ask current Slovenian migrants arriving on our shores at present –why don’t they wish to be part of the 1950 Slovenian clubs established to perpetuate the culture of what it is to be ‘A Slovenian’?

Am I a Slovenian? No. I am an Australian born of Slovenian parents, proud of my Slovenian heritage. But if I chose to live in Slovenia, I would be out of place. I would be an alien because I have grown up in Australian environment that clings to a bygone Slovenian era whilst adapting to an Australian environment. I’m caught between two worlds, proud of my connection to both.



Andrej receiving a prize



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Lenti Lenko OAM

Age
Starost

42

Town
Mesto

Hampton Park, Victoria



Highly Commendable

I AM ALSO A SLOVENIAN

I was brought up in the ‘Slovenian spirit’ right from the very beginning, having parents who are very proud and patriotic Slovenians! Before June 25th 1991, Slovenia was part of the former Yugoslavia. My parents strictly taught me that our background is Slovenian and NOT Yugoslav! This of course led to much initial confusion when telling people about my background who didn’t know anything about Slovenia!

I have been actively involved in the Slovenia Community in Melbourne from a very early age, attending Slovenian language classes at the Slovenian Association ‘Planica’ Later on, I also attended Saturday School Slovenian classes at Box Hill. Our family regularly attended ‘zabave’ and other functions at the Slovenian Association Planica and all the other Slovenian clubs in Melbourne and Geelong. In addition, we also regularly attended Slovenian Mass at Kew where I’m still active as an organist for the church choir. I was also baptised at Kew as well as getting married there many years later. It was at Planica and Kew that I performed publicly for the first time playing Slovenian folk songs on the organ and accordion at the age of 9. I’ve since been involved in over 20 Slovenian Youth Concerts held annually around Australia.

In the early 1990s, I became very involved in the movement for Slovenian Independence in Australia as an active member of the Slovenian National Council of Victoria. This is a time in my life that I will NEVER forget, especially considering my strong conviction that Slovenia becomes an independent and sovereign state because it was the will of the Slovenian people! I admit, that occasionally, I was perhaps a bit too loud with my convictions. However, despite being labelled a nationalist and even ‘extremist’ by some around

me, I don’t ever regret my actions nearly a quarter of a century since that historic time for Slovenians living in Slovenia and around the world!

Being a musician and private music teacher, Slovenian music has always been an integral part of who I am. At home, my mother always played records and cassettes of Slovenian folk music and I often remember falling asleep to this music as a young child! I also remember sitting on the floor in our lounge room listening to my dad play the accordion and we often had ‘family singalongs’ with my parents on a Saturday or Sunday night after dinner! Hence, my huge passion for Slovenian music will never subside and I’m proud and honoured to know so many talented Slovenian musicians in Australia, Slovenia and elsewhere!

I lived in Slovenia for a year in 2005-2006 where I really immersed myself in the culture, language and lifestyle of the country. I had the opportunity to meet my many relatives: Aunts, uncles and cousins who were very supportive of my decision to spend an extended time in the homeland my parents left in 1968 for a new life in Australia. I’ve also become life long friends with so many wonderful people whom I met during this time. This was in many ways a wake up call for me in that I soon learnt that life in Slovenia is much different to the ‘utopian’ image of life in that country that was often portrayed to us in Australia. Despite this, I soon became accustomed to living in Slovenia and I dearly missed being there when I arrived back in Australia 8 years ago. I had every intention of going back for the long term but fate and destiny made sure that I remained in Australia after meeting my beautiful wife, Rachel in 2008. Rachel had never heard of Slovenia before meeting me



Lenti Lenko OAM *continued*

but she sure knows a lot about the place now! To be completely honest, she doesn't have a choice now that she's married to me! ☺

Whilst Rachel can't speak or understand Slovenian (despite a few words and phrases here and there), she strongly encourages me to continue being actively involved within the Slovenian Community, working as a Slovenian radio broadcaster as well as pursuing my passion of playing Slovenian music with my many talented musician friends. Our beautiful 2-year-old son, Christian is also exposed to all things Slovenian. His grand parents have been strictly instructed to speak to him in Slovenian at every opportunity!

Each night, as a family we pray 'Sveti Angel' and sing 'Angelček Varuh Moj'.

A major highlight for me was when Rachel and I sang 'V dolini tih' as a duet at the Slovenian Youth Concert in Sydney in 2010! For someone who had never heard of Slovenia 2 years beforehand, she really mastered the correct pronunciation of the words in this very popular Slovenian folk song. Her mother in law, Tilka Lenko also made very sure that the pronunciation was right! ☺ It goes without saying that we plan on visiting Slovenia as a family in the near future so Rachel and Christian can properly understand what all the passion and fuss is about!

In concluding, it goes without saying that I'm very proud of my Slovenian background. I love the culture, language and music. I love Slovenia with all my heart and soul and despite the fact that the country is currently facing a number of challenges Slovenia is a respected country within the international community. I am proud that I was able to witness Slovenia achieving it's 1000-year dream for statehood and independence.

The Slovenian Community in Australia is very well respected and has successfully established itself in every major city and town of this great land over the last 60 years. Much is currently being mentioned about the future of the Slovenian Community in Australia because the older generation is moving on and the younger generation isn't overly concerned about it's future. It's hoped that the community will continue being active with a newer and vibrant younger generation with fresh ideas for a positive future. However, compromise, understanding and respect between the different generations and the acceptance of new ideas are imperative if we want the Slovenian Community in Australia to survive and prosper in the rapidly changing times of the 21st century!

I am a proud Australian and obviously love Australia with all my heart and soul! But I am also a proud Slovenian despite the fact that I speak Slovenian with a distinct Aussie twang! I'm so blessed to be bi lingual despite the fact that my grasp of the Slovenian language will never be of 'native speaker' standard!

I'm also very blessed to have two homelands! Australia is my first homeland because I was born here. Slovenia is my second homeland because my background hails from this beautiful part of the world and I'm also a Slovenian citizen. I'm indeed very proud to be an Australian Slovenian!

Australija je moja prva domovina in Slovenija je moja druga domovina! Tukaj sem se rodil ampak moje korenine so slovenske. Imam tudi dvojno državljanstvo in pristrčno ljubim obe domovini! Ponosen sem, da sem avstralski Slovenec!



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Rachel Lenko

Age
Starost

39

Town
Mesto

Hampton Park, Victoria



Honourable Mention

I am Slovenian too

I have no Slovenian blood in me, but I feel a little part of me is Slovenian being married to a very proud Australian Slovenian. I am ashamed to say, that before meeting my husband I had not even heard of Slovenia. I now feel like I know this remarkable country well even though I have never been there. We are planning on visiting for an extended trip soon so Christian and I can see this beautiful country up close and meet our extended family.

My introduction to Slovenian culture was interesting to say the least. Early on when I was dating my husband to be, the infamous Lenti Lenko, who I soon learnt every one in the Slovenian community knew, he invited me to come and listen to his band play. When I turned up to the Slovenian club in St Albans, to the sounds of the base guitar and accordion, I started to wonder just what I was getting myself into.

A few weeks later, I met Lenti's parents for the first time. Whilst being shown around the house, Lenti took me outside to see the back yard, where I got the shock of my life. His Dad had just returned from a deer hunting trip, and the deer was hanging in the garage and was having the blood drained from it. I was horrified! However, I have come to love this Slovenian culture.

My husband is a proud second generation Slovenian, with dual citizenship, who is passionate about the language, music and culture. Our son is a third generation Slovenian, whose grandparents speak to him regularly in Slovenian, and I hope one day will be able to communicate in this language. My Mother in law prays *Sveti Angel* with our son when she sees him, and my husband and I pray this with

him every night before bed and we sing together *Angelcek Varuh Moj*, which he loves and always brings a smile of familiarity to his beautiful face. While I don't speak the language, I have picked up a few words here and there (some that should not be repeated!) and I even sang *V dolini tih* at the Slovenian Youth concert in Sydney a few years ago.

I feel like the Slovenian community has embraced me as one of their own. The Slovenian people I have encountered are friendly, loud, hard working, tidy and passionate. They love their music, dancing, singing, drinking, good food and they have convinced me that a shot of Schnops will fix any sickness. I have visited all the Slovenian clubs and churches in Melbourne, Geelong, Sydney and Wollongong. I am amazed at how well established the Slovenian community is in Australia, despite it's small size and coming from a country with a population of only 2 million.

I am proud of my families Slovenian background and I feel like a part of me is Slovenian too.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Sandra Krnel nee Hervatin

Age
Starost

63

Town
Mesto

Bulleen, Victoria



Commendable

I am a Slovenian too

My name is Sandra Krnel (born Hervatin) and I am a proud "2nd Generation Slovenian".

I was born in Australia 63 years ago and grew up in the Slovenian community. I was one of the first students at the original Slovenian School and participated in all the concerts and Moomba Parade, proudly wearing my Slovenian National Costume.

After studying for 4 years at Santa Maria College (Northcote), I completed a Secretarial Diploma at Stott's Business College in Melbourne. This Diploma opened a lot of doors for me and I was fortunate to be employed in satisfying roles during my working life. I am proud to say that in my last job I was the Manager of Mother Romana Home from 2001 until 2011, when I retired. The facility was the only Slovenian one in Australia, and I can honestly say this was the most satisfying role in my working career and I have many wonderful memories of my 10 years there.

I married a Slovenian (Peter, who is now deceased) and we were very involved in the Slovenian Association Melbourne (Research). We have two children, who also spent much of their growing years in the Slovenian community and also went to language school and performed in concerts at all the local Slovenian Clubs as well as interstate. As they grew into adults, they became less involved, but thankfully they still have a reasonable grasp of the Slovenian language - enough to get them around if ever they go there again. I now have 3 beautiful grandchildren who know a few very basic words, but their pronunciation is perfect.

We went to Slovenia as a family in 1980, a first



for our children and myself. As well as meeting all our relatives, we travelled quite a bit and saw all the beautiful landmarks. A special time I still remember was when we arrived at Bled and my son (9 years old at the time) took one look at the stunning scene in front of us and said "oh, this is the place that everyone has a painting of on their wall in Australia". They are now in their early 40's, and they still tell me stories about things that happened during that holiday, that I have forgotten about.

I spent many years playing bocce (balinanje) representing SDM. We played in Victoria, interstate and even organised a "reunion tour" in Slovenia in 1995. My next trip to Slovenia was in 2006 as part of a tour - each of my visits was just beautiful. Another tour was organised a few years later and the Slovenian bocce players also toured Australia twice. Hopefully I will go again one day, who knows?

Although I am not as actively involved in the community as I used to be, I help out if I am



Sandra Krnel *continued*

needed, but this involves more administrative tasks. I am very much proud to be a Slovenian and everything that has been achieved by a relatively small group of people. However, I must say that I get very disillusioned when I see people who “appear” to be working for the community, but are actually more interested in themselves and how it will be of benefit to them. It reminds me of a song called “Too Many Chiefs & Not Enough Indians”. I would like to see more “unity in the community” - people working together, rather than against each other or for their own interest. This is particularly important now because a lot of the “original” Slovenian migrants have either aged or passed on and we need more of the next generation involved. The “older” generation should be setting a good example so that their hard work can be respected and continued by their descendants.

At this moment, I am very blessed to have not only my children and grandchildren in my life, but also my parents, who are still quite independent and forever dedicated to their family. Wednesday night is “family dinner for the Wednesday Crew” at my parents’ home for both my family and my younger brother and his family, where we not only have dinner, but we sit around the table talking about what is happening in our lives, current affairs and even TV soapies!!

I have lots of relatives in Australia, Slovenia & Canada, as well as many good friends who enrich my life and I hope I am a positive in their lives as well. Yes, I am very grateful for everything and everyone in my life and yes, I too am Slovenian!

Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Frances Ryff nee Gelt

Age
Starost

39

Town
Mesto

Mooroolbark, Victoria



Commendable

I Am Slovenian Too

Growing up in Australia with Slovenian parents always gave me many opportunities to see and experience the Slovenian heritage and culture.

From a young age I was introduced to Slovenian folk dancing, learning the Slovenian language at the Slovenian Association Melbourne on Sunday's, participating in concerts that were performed in front of many people, reciting poetry and performing in plays. We travelled to perform to many different places around Australian including Adelaide, Canberra, Sydney, Albury, Bonegilla and locally, giving Australians an inside to our culture.

Amongst these performances was one at my primary school fete, where I was dressed in my very own Gorenjska national costume, dancing to a number of different folk songs. That day I was very nervous and apprehensive. The reason being, that all my school friends would see me, and I guess I was a little embarrassed. Looking back on that day now, I remember dancing, and seeing those friends watching me with interest. I believe they were curious about my nationality and often wondered what it would be like to be involved in a community like ours. I feel I was very lucky to have had these experiences.

If I had not been involved in the Slovenian community here in Australia, I would never have met my best friend Yana who is also Slovenian, and to this day, still is my best friend and also Godmother to our children. She also has the typical Slovenian personality, that being kind, loving, caring and could not do enough for you. For this friendship I will always be grateful.

Looking back on the many times I've performed

in front of an audience, was probably not my favourite memory of growing up as a Slovenian. Something that will always sit close to my heart and that I will always treasure, are the times shared with my mum (Draga Gelt) teaching me how to make the traditional Slovenian cake 'Potica'. From mixing and kneading the dough, to making the filling, and taste testing it, baking it, then especially being able to eat it when it's finished! Mmmmm! My mum has taught me this tradition, which I in turn will continue and pass on to our children.

Over the years I have met many Slovenian people living in Australia and also our relatives who live in Slovenia. They are the most welcoming, caring, hospitable and giving people. One thing that is traditional here and in Slovenia is the constant supply of food. Never say no more, I actually think that means more in Slovenian.

When I was 2 years old, I visited Slovenia for the very first time, although I have no recollection of this. My next time there was when my Dad (Joseph Gelt), was there on holidays, but became very sick and hospitalised. He passed away on the 19th June 2008 in his home country. His request when he was alive to my little brother Elvin, was that if anything ever happened to him, he wanted to be buried somewhere nice, where his grave can be looked after forever. What better place than with his parents in his home village of Velika Polana. It's such a beautiful little village, even the cemeteries filled with long lasting candles lit at night and the graves which are like flower beds, has such a warm feeling about it. Places like this give so much comfort; it's amazing that even the little attention to detail can have such an impact on your life and imprint it forever.



Frances Ryff *nee* Gelt *continued*

When I returned to Slovenia with my family in 2009 for my Dad's 1st anniversary of his death, we celebrated his life together and shared and experienced so many memories that we, as a family, will hold on to forever. We visited family of people, some we had never met before, but made us feel so welcome and couldn't do enough for us. My cousin Olga, was like our tour guide for 3 weeks. She showed us some of the most beautiful countryside I've ever seen. From the crystal clear waters of the Soča River, Lake Bled and Vintgar falls, to the mountains of Vogel, Vršič and of course the highest mountain in Slovenia Triglav. We also visited the capital City Ljubljana, where we went to the Ljubljana castle, and got a 360-degree view of the city. Absolutely amazing.

There is just so much history, and the architecture, unlike anything I have ever seen. Postojna Caves are the second largest stalactite and stalagmite caves in the world, which we actually got to see, and then to the history that belongs to Postojnski Grad was so interesting.

Slovenia is where my life and heritage begins. I hope to be able pass this on to our children, then in turn there's!

Throughout my life I have had so much respect for the Slovenian culture, history, customs and traditions, but even more so now.

I am Slovenian too, and very proud to be!



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Megan Lowe

Age
Starost

30

Town
Mesto

Scoresby, Victoria



Commendable

I am Slovenian too...

On my 30th Birthday I decided to quit my steady office job in Melbourne, Australia and follow my heart with my mountain bike to Slovenia for what was about to be the best summer of my life. Slovenia has always appeared alluring for me. Growing up I had great insight into Slovene culture; being lucky enough to experience typical Slovene cuisine, and tight family culture with my Slovenian grandparents and their network of Slovene friends.

My mother unfortunately did not encourage Slovene practice at home, so I suppose that added to my curiosity and growing fascination from this far away land that my grandparents migrated from.

I still hold fond memories from my childhood, dancing in their living room, cluttered with typical Slovenian souvenirs, relics from their past, telling a sad but victorious story of their migration to Australia over 55 years ago. As children we would dance to the accordion and to my grandpas Slovene music collection played on his old scratchy record player. The energy of that time reflected through children of a completely different upbringing, knowing nothing of the hardships of war or the political strains of Yugoslavia's history.

To me the language is like music also, its gentle rhythmic flow, the pitch ringing straight to my heart, whether or not that comes with the familiarity of my happy childhood I do not know, but still to this day, to hear Slovene language spoken, especially in the Dolenjska region dialect, reminds me of home. I could close my eyes, and happily fall asleep feeling safe and secure.

My move to Bovec, amongst the Julian Alps last year was like moving into a Fairytale. A summer of Mountain Biking, crystal clear streams safe enough to drink, wild raspberries, blueberries,

strawberries amongst the lush forest trails. The vivid contrast between the green Beech forests littered with Autumn leaves and moss covered limestone rocks was like feeding my soul with the richness this country has to offer. The icy Soča River, coloured emerald green, unique to this valley, ensured that my daily surroundings reflected that which only postcards usually can. I was able to relive my fond childhood memories through being with the families of those friends I made, and also my own, indulging in Potica and all the sweets common to the area and the cultural traditions still played out through festivals, dance and song. It is admirable to me how well Slovenians keep their history alive. I love how even though for the most part of my life I was living 20 thousand miles away, my Slovene family welcomes me with open arms, and I am immediately like one of the family, with so much love and laughter to be shared.

Although I now realise that I have always looked at Slovenia through rose coloured glasses, it is still a sacred place that reflects many of my most precious values. Family values, Forest preservation and the sheer beauty of the nature that in many places is still unchanged by man. So the coincidence of following my heart to the motherland, has been that I have also found true love, which has changed my life forever and motivated me to persist with learning the Slovene language.

I feel Slovenian Too because I was so compelled to come here to fill a missing piece of my soul, which would be otherwise lost in History when my grandparents eventually pass away. I felt it was my duty to know, to touch and feel Slovenia as they once did to preserve this heritage from my family and keep it alive for generations to come. Slovenia will always be a part of my life because.... I am Slovenian too.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Silvia Josephine Žele

Age
Starost

53

Town
Mesto

Ljubljana, Slovenia
(born Melbourne, Victoria)



Essay in Slovenian

Slovenska vas v Avstraliji: vzgoja v avstralskoslovenski skupnosti v 60. in 70. letih prejšnjega stoletja

Moja generacija slovenskih Avstralcev je imela v številnih pogledih mnogo sreče.

V šestdesetih letih so Slovenci imeli veliko potrebo po druženju in ohranjanju stikov z drugimi sonarodnjaki, zato so bili ustanovljeni številni klubi, prav tako so se v skupnosti redno organizirali dogodki.

Spomnim se, da je bil za veliko noč in božič obvezen obisk maše v Slovenskem katoliškem misijonu svetega Cirila in Metoda v mestu Kew, za silvestrovo pa je bilo treba obleči nova oblačila za ples, na katerih so se plesali samo valčki in polke. Imeli smo tudi veliko piknikov z obilo hrane in zabave z živo glasbo, na katerih je bil obvezen nakup ali prodaja srečk za srečelov, s katerimi se je zbiral denar v različne namene.

Slovenska hrana in navade so se razlikovale od drugih in zdaj, ko sem odrasla, bolj cenim bogastvo svojega kulturnega izvora. Slovenski jezik je kompleksen, obstajajo tudi številna regionalna narečja, ki jih tujci težko razumejo, vseeno pa so se Slovenci v Avstraliji raje osredotočili na komunikacijo, kot da bi jih skrbelo glede jezika oziroma narečja, iz katerega je beseda izhajala. Oblečene smo imeli »capote«, nosili »marele«, uporabljali smo nemške tehnične in mehanske izraze ter uživali v »golažu« ali »gulažu« s svojimi »njoki«, »gnocchi« ali »žličniki«.

Odrasli Slovenci so se vedli kot člani velike vasi, in to je pomenilo, da je bilo vedno na voljo odprto in spodbudno občinstvo za kulturne dejavnosti, ki so vključevale otroke in najstnike. Zbor je pel, ljudje so plesali, imeli smo predstavitve, branje poezije, branje pri

maši, slovenske učne ure, tekmovanja za mis Slovenije, nastope za božič in materinski dan ter tudi letne koncerte slovenske mladine. Odrasli so vestno izdelovali kostime, bili taksisti svojim in drugim otrokom, gledali so vaje, nabavljali hrano in pijačo, spodbujali in ploskali ob pravem času.

Eden mojih najljubših spominov vključuje izdelovanje moje narodne noše. Ne spomnim se, kdaj v sedemdesetih je postalo nujno, da smo za pomembne cerkvene in kulturne dogodke oblekli narodno nošo, očitno je bila to skupna odločitev »mater«. Debatiralo se je o vzorcih, materialih in stilih, med vsemi možnostmi se je bilo treba določiti pravila, ki smo jih upoštevali pri izdelavi narodne noše. Imela sem veliko srečo, da je moja mama znala šivati in oblikovati vzorce, hkrati pa je bila tudi ustvarjalna!

Pazljivo smo iskali trgovine s tkaninami, da bi našli prave materiale: zlate kroglice, cekine in zlato nit, težko zlato verižico, čipko, črn žamet, tkanino za obrobo, bombažno blago in šal. Moje dolge bele nogavice z bunkicami so bile ročno pletene z ljubeznijo in so se mi popolnoma prilegale. Spodnje krilo iz belega bombaža in srajca sta bila oblikovana in sešita po fotografijah avtentičnih oblačil. Vrhnja obleka je morala biti dovolj velika, da je prekrila vse sloje spodnjih oblačil, hkrati pa dovolj prožna, da je lahko sledila gibanju slovenskih narodnih plesov. S čipko okrašen črn predpasnik z okrasno zlato verižico si je bilo treba nadeti povrhu, okoli ramen pa barven šal.

Posebej je treba omeniti mojo avbo. Bila je zelo težka in tako neudobna, da sem jo težko nosila več kot eno uro, vendar je bila prava umetnina. Mama je z veliko truda prišla vsako kroglico posebej in okrasne cekine na črn žamet, nato pa



Silvia Josephine Žele *continued*

izdelala visoko obliko avbe. Rezultat je bil zares impresivna in opazna stvaritev, ki sem jo vedno ponosno nosila.

Kot številni drugi Avstralci prve generacije sem tudi sama nehala sodelovati pri dogodkih slovenske skupnosti v dvajsetih in tridesetih letih svojega življenja, saj sem se bolj osredotočila na svojo kariero. Vseeno pa sem informacije o slovenski skupnosti prejemale od družinskih članov, prijateljev in prek revije »Misli«.

Internetna doba omogoča komunikacijo prek elektronske pošte ter družabnih omrežij Facebook, LinkedIn in Skype, zato sem lahko v stiku s številnimi člani avstralskoslovenske skupnosti

in dobivam informacije o dogodkih, čeprav sem se preselila v Slovenijo, kjer delam kot učiteljica angleškega jezika, prevajalka in rodoslovka. Pomoč potomcem slovenskih izseljencev pri iskanju podatkov o njihovih prednikih mi prinaša veliko zadovoljstva. Ko svojim strankam pokažem fotografije ali rojstne, poročne ali mrliške liste njihovih prednikov, lahko postanejo zelo čustveni. Imam srečo, da delijo z menoj številne ganljive zgodbe o svojih slovenskih starih starših in prastarših in kako nove podatke vključujejo v zgodovino svojih družin.

Vesela sem, da sem danes del prave globalne slovenske skupnosti, in čutim se tesno povezana tako z Avstralijo kot s Slovenijo.

NOTE: Translation team: Silvia Josephine Žele (translated her Essay from English language) with assistance of Tomaž Eržen and Dr Nina Novak Kerbler





Silvia Josephine Žele (*English Essay*)

It Took a Village: Being raised in the Slovenian Australian community in the 1960s and 1970s

My generation of Slovenian Australians was very fortunate in many ways. In the 1960s, Slovenians felt a strong need to associate with, and keep in contact with, other Slovenians, so many clubs were established and community events occurred regularly.

I remember when Easter and Christmas meant a trip to mass at the Slovenian Catholic Mission of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Kew, and New Year's Eve meant wearing brand new clothes to dances where waltzes and polkas were the norm. There were also many picnics with an abundance of food, live entertainment provided by singers and musicians, and the obligatory buying and/or selling of raffle tickets to raise money for various purposes.

Slovenian foods and customs were different to those of non-Slovenians, and now that I am an adult, I am more appreciative of the richness of my cultural background. The Slovenian language is complex, and there are numerous regional dialects that can be difficult for non-locals to understand, however, in Australia, Slovenians seemed to focus on communication rather than worry about the language or dialect a word originally came from. So we wore 'capote', carried 'marele', used German technical and mechanical words, and enjoyed eating 'golaž', or 'goulash' with our 'njoki', 'gnocchi', or 'zličnike'.

The adult Slovenians acted like members of a large village, and this meant there was always a receptive and supportive audience for cultural activities involving children and

teenagers. There was choir singing, folk dancing demonstrations, poetry reading, readings at mass, Slovenian lessons, Miss Slovenia contests, and performances at Christmas and Mother's day events, as well as at the annual Slovenian Youth concerts. The adults dutifully made costumes, acted as taxis for their own and other people's offspring, watched rehearsals, supplied food and drink, offered kind words of encouragement, and clapped in the right places.

One of my dearest memories involves the making of my 'narodna noša', or national costume. I forget exactly when in the 1970s it became essential to wear national costume to important church and cultural events, but there seemed to be a group decision made by 'the mothers'. Patterns, materials and styles were discussed, and some uniformity among the various possibilities decided upon. How fortunate I was to have a mother who could sew, follow patterns, and was creative too!

We carefully searched fabric shops to find the right materials: gold beads, sequins and thread, a heavy gold chain, lace, black velvet, lining fabric, cotton fabric and a suitable scarf. My long white socks were lovingly hand-knitted in a bubble pattern and fitted me perfectly. A white cotton petticoat and shirt were designed and sewn together following patterns made from authentic photos. The overdress had to be made large enough to go over all the layers of underclothes, and yet be able to sway and move appropriately for the Slovenian folk dances. A lace-trimmed black apron, with a decorative gold chain, was belted over this, and a colourful scarf was worn around the shoulders.



Silvia Josephine Žele *(English Essay continued)*

Special mention must be made of my hat. It was heavy and uncomfortable to wear for more than an hour, but was an absolute work of art. Mum painstakingly sewed each bead and sequin onto the black velvet and then constructed the high dome of the hat. The result was a truly impressive eye-catching creation that I was always proud to wear.

Like a number of other first generation Australians, I stopped regularly attending Slovenian community events in my 20s and 30s as I focused more on building my career. However, information about the Slovenian community reached me via family members, friends and the 'Misli'.

The arrival of the internet age with communication possible via email, Facebook,

LinkedIn and Skype, means that I am in contact with numerous members of the Australian Slovenian community, and am kept up-to-date with events, even though I have moved to Slovenia, where I work as an English teacher, translator and genealogist. It is very satisfying work helping the descendants of Slovenian migrants find out about their ancestors. When I show clients photos of entries related to their ancestors from birth, marriage, or death registers, they can become very emotional. I am fortunate in that I get to hear many moving stories about their Slovenian grandparents and great grandparents as they incorporate new information into their family histories.

Today, I am happy to be part of a truly global Slovenian community and feel deeply connected to both Australia and Slovenia.





Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Ashleigh Ryff

Age
Starost

19

Town
Mesto

Mooroolbark, Victoria



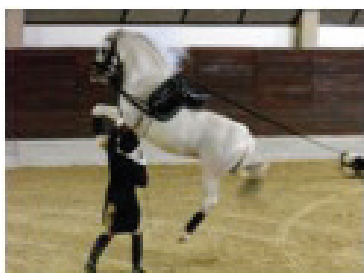
Encouragement Award

I am Slovenian too

Today at the age of 19 years I am proud to be part of the Slovenian community and the traditions. Up until this day I have been able to take part in the yearly traditions of making the traditional Slovenian cake potica every Easter and Christmas, boiling and colouring eggs, having horse radish and ham for breakfast.

In June 2009 I was able to share my experience of going to Slovenia for the first time with my mum, dad, brother, my nanna (Draga Gelt), my step nanna, two of my uncles and auntie and also my little cousin. This trip was to help celebrate the one-year anniversary of my Grandad's death. My Grandad was a Slovenian too, and because of this trip, it helped bring us all together. We got the chance to meet all our family over in Slovenia for the first time where we based ourselves in Ljubljana.

One of my favourite places that we went to while we were away was when we went to Lipica, this was where I saw the most beautiful horses for the first time. I love horses and I felt I connected to this place, being so unique, just like I am. When we arrived, it was when all the young foals were born, these foals are the only horses that are born black but when they grow up and are fully-grown they are pure white horses. I absolutely loved this place, being able to walk through the stables and being able to see all the amazing horses was just incredible. It was like I had entered a whole new world that I had never been to before. We had a chance to walk



around Lipica on our own; this is where we watched some of these incredible animals doing their training routines for their

next show.

While I was over in Slovenia I found the people to be very kind and caring people. In a way it was like everyone new each other. My cousin Olga, who lives over in Slovenia, made our journey a lot easier for us while we were there. Olga was like a travel guide where she took us around and showed us all these amazing places.

Another place that I enjoyed seeing was Lake Bled. Lake Bled was one of the most beautiful lakes I have ever seen. This was a lake where you could see the bottom and see all the fish swimming around. We had the experience of swimming in Lake



Bled and using a rope to swing into the water. We paddled to the middle of the lake, where the little church is, in a rowboat.

This journey and experience for me was incredible and something I could never forget. Knowing my heritage steps back to such a beautiful country with beautiful people, with amazing countryside and community.

I would love to return one day in the future with close friends to share my incredible experience and amazing sights, people and communities I have experienced in Slovenia.

Even when I do not speak the Slovenian language apart from understanding some basic words, I have grown to love Slovenia and I think, I am a Slovenian too.



Ashleigh receiving her prize



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Anka Makovec

Age
Starost

76

Town
Mesto

Devonport, Tasmania

Tudi jaz sem Slovenka

Opisati čustva izseljenca ni ravno enostavna zadeva, posebno če ti je pomembno, da daš svoji pisani besedi moč resnice, pa naj bo taka ali taka. Le tako bodo tisti, ki pridejo za nami, upoštevali to, kar jim bo seglo v srce in tam tudi ostalo.

Ko pogledam nazaj, se moram uprašati: je teh mojih 50 let pod Južnim križem obogatelo mojo dušo ali ne?

Z veseljem zdaj pokimavam, saj so mi leta prilagajanja novi kulturi, jeziku, podnebjju in oddaljenosti vsega domačega, pomagala preživeti marsikaj, o čemer se nam še sajalo ni da je to sploh mogoče.

Spoznanje, da je naša SLOVENSKA kri na tem koncu sveta kar priljubljena in vredna toplega stiska roke ljudi drugih ras in tudi verovanj, in to ne zato kar imamo, temveč zato kar smo.

To mi je na moč lajšalo pot v zrela leta, polna toplih in dobrih prijateljev, ki so zrasli ne iz nenehne dirke po višjem statusu materialnih dobrin, temveč iz iskrenega truda biti dober do sočloveka in Matere Narave in predvsem vlaganja pozitivne energije za graditev mostov prijateljstva, v tako drugačno ukrojeni družbi kot je multikulturna Australija.

Sreča mi je bila dana, da sem preko let delala kot sestra v bolnicah in prišla takoj od začetka totalno novega načina življenja, v stik z domorodci tega kontinenta, spoznala njih zgodovino nepopisno trpljenje.

Prijateljstvo z njimi mi je razširilo obzorje spoznanj, da so spremembe vedno mogoče za dobrobit vseh ljudi, ki sanjajo pod Južnim križem. Preko let se je rodilo dolgoletno prijateljstvo med njihovo dobro znano pesnico in borko za človeške pravice vseh zatiranih - Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) in z belo pesnico Judith Wright in majhno, a žilavo in

radovedno Slovenko... Med vse tri se je usidralo nerazrušljivo prijateljstvo, tako da smo se, z ramo ob rami podpirale od ene bitke do druge, vse tja do ustanovitve Nacionalnega Parka Svetovne Dediščine v divjinah Tasmanije in priznanje človečanskih pravic za Aborigine.

Z dokajšnjo pomočjo nekaj politikov v Federalni vladi, ki so stali vso pot na naši strani, je Oodgeroo končno le dobila vrnjen kos rodne grude svojega plemena na otoku Stradbroke blizu Brisbana. Ni trajalo dolgo da se je tam potem odprl center za izobraževanje, predvsem mladega rodu, ki naj bi doprinesel medsebojno razumevanje od tu naprej.

Pod tropskim drevjem je zbranim vneto govorila o zdaj odprtih vratih vsega možnega. Nikoli ne bom pozabila kako nam je na dan odprtja vneto povedala:

“Glejte, ta naša dežela Australia je zadosti velika in bogata, da nam vsem lahko nudi varen in topel dom! Le skupaj je treba držati - z razumevanjem in dobro voljo do sočloveka in Matere Narave.”

Preko let me je potem zaneslo v ‘Outback’ med plemenske slikarje, kar mi je nepopisno razširilo obzorje teh edinstvenih ljudi, o katerih nismo skoraj nič vedeli. Kot mladostnica, rojena na vasi ob bistri gorski reki Soči, sem lačno prebirala vse o tej misteriozni deželi kengurujev. Posebno me je prevzel film “S čredami čez kontinent”, ob koncu katerega sem si sveto zaobljubila, da bom ‘en dan’ tam potovala in raziskovala tisto pristno deželo, pa naj stane kar hoče...

Med domorodci sem se vedno počutila varno domače. Ni trajalo dolgo da me je njihov starosta, slikar Goobalathaldin (Dick Roughsey), posvojil v njihovo pleme Lardilov in mi tudi podaril njihovo ime - Naregin, v našem prevodu: Jutranja zvezda...



Anka Makovec *continued*

To mi je prineslo veliko samozaupanja, vedoč, da sem na pravem mestu z delitvijo zaupanja in novega razumevanja.

Starosta slikar me je nagovoril naj vsaj za par let poučujem po šolah njihovo umetnost, v kateri so me oni dobro podkovali.

Tisti čas mi je prinesl veliko veselja, saj so vsi otroci to novo smer pograbili z obema rokama in mi zapustili nepozabne spomine.

Po prihodu na Tasmanijo v 1980ih, so tri leta protestov za rešitev divje reke Franklin, pragozdov in antičnih ostankov domorodne zgodovine, minila kar hitro in od tam sva se z malo hčerko Anito, naselili na severu otoka v pristaniškem mestecu Devonport, kjer sem sedaj, mimogrede povedano, edina Slovenka. Lanskoletna nesreča s kolesom v mestnem prometu je začela pisati novo poglavje

preživetja, saj me je to precej prizadelo, ker sedaj lahko okoli ležem le s pomočjo dveh palic.

A kaj bi človek jamral, saj je naša kri prilagojena premagovanju vseh vrst težav in to že iz davnih časov. Pa bom še to preživela brez cviljenja, upajmo...

Življenje nas preizkuša z dobrim in slabim a vse to skupaj je tudi koristna šola za naslednje poglavje, tako se mi zdi.

Ko se pogovarjam z Avstralci raznih življenskih struj, mi je vedno v čast in veselje, ko tako radi povedo, kako pridni in delavni se jim zdijo ljudje iz male deželice Slovenije tam nekje iz alpskih gora Evrope.

Če bom v bodoče kdaj slišala da smo čuteči, darežljivi in veseli tipi - bom pa še bolj vesela!

Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Eddie Štolfa

Age
Starost

46

Town
Mesto

Williamstown, Victoria

NJPREJ BI RAD POUČIL, DA SEM PONOSEN NA MOJE SLOVENSKE DEDIŠČINE IN JAZ SMARTRAM, DA JE VELIK PRIVILEGIJ, BITI PRIZNAN KOT DRŽAVLJAN SLOVENIJE.

ČEPRAV SEM BIL ROJEN V AVSTRALIJI, SAMO PO NEKAJ LETIH KO SO MOJI STARŠI EMIGRIRALI IZ SLOVENIJE, SEM BIL VZGOJEN V SLOVENSKE TRADICIJI IN KULTURI. MOJ PRVI GOVOREČ JEZIK JE BIL SLOVENSKI, IN VEČINA MIJH SORODNIKOV, ŽIVIJO V SLOVENIJI. MOJI STARŠI IN SESTRA (MOJA EDINA SESTRA) SO DRŽAVLJANI SLOVENIJE. JAZ SEM OBISKAL SLOVENIJO NA VEČ PRILŽNOSTIH V MOJEM ŽIVLJENJU.

JAZ SEM DORASTEL D DRUŽBI SLOVENSKE SKUPNOSTI KATERI ŽIVIJO V MELBOURNU V AVSTRALIJI. JAZ SEM SE UDELEŽIL V RAZRED ZA SLOVENSKE JEZIK, NA MARIBYRNONG HIGH SCHOOL OB SOBOTAH ZJUTRAJ, IN KOT MLADENIČ, SEM SE TUDI UDELEŽIL V ŠOLO SLOVENSKEGA JEZIKA PO SVETI MAŠI V SLOVENSKEM VERSKE SREDIŠČU KEW MELBOURNE. TO JE CERKEV SVETEGA CIRILA IN METODA KATERA JE BILA PRVA SLOVENSKE CERKEV V AVSTRALIJI, KI SO JO ZGRADILI SLOVENC I IN SLUŽI KOT VERSKO IN KULTURNO SREDIŠČE SLOVENC I V MELBOURNU. TU SEM SODELOVAL PRI SLOVENSKE KULTURNE PRIREDITVAH. MOJA STARA MAMA, MARCELA BOLE, JE BILA ZELO POZNANA PESNICA POEZIJ ŠIROM AVSTRALIJE MED SLOVENSKE SKUPNOSTI, JE IZDALA TRI KNJIGE POEZIJ IN LITERATURE, IN JE TUDI BILA ZELO AVTIVNA IN ZAVEDNA SLOVENKA. MOJI STARŠI JOŽE IN DANILA ŠTOLFA KATERA STA TUDI ZELO AKTIVNA MED SLOVENC I V MELBOURNU. OBA STA ŽE MNOGO LET ČLANA IN TUDI V ODBORU SLOVENSKEGA DRUŠTVA MELBOURNE. JAZ SEM TUDI BIL AKTIVEN ČLAN PRI MLADINSKE SKUPINE TEGA DRUŠTVA KJER SEM SODELOVAL. DRUGI ČLANI MOJE RODNE DRUŽINE SO IGRALI PRI SLOVENSKE GLAZBENE SKUPINE IN ORGANIZIRALI ŠPORTNE REPREZENTANTE KLUBOV SLOVENSKE SKUPNOSTI. TAKO DOPRINOS OD MOJE DRUŽINE IN SLOVENSKE NAČIN ŽIVLJENJA SO TKANINE MOJEGA DORAŠČANJA TO MI JE KONČNO VODILO DO ZAKLJUČKA MOJEGA POTOVANJA ZA POSTATI SLOVENSKE DRŽAVLJAN KONČNO.

DANES BIVAM V MELBOURNU, AVSTRALIJI, KJER DELAM NA FINANČNE TRGIH, KOT SKLAD MANAGER IVESTIRAM NA SVETOVNE OBVEZNE TRGIH, VKLJUČNO Z SLOVENIJO. SEM ZAKLJUČIL DIPLOMIRAL COMMERCE NA UNIVERZI VICTORIA V MELBOURNU, NATO PA SEM OPRAVIL PODIPLOMSKE DIPLOMO V APPLIED FINANCE IN INVESTICIJE Z VREDNOSTNE PAPIRJI INSTITUTE ZA AUSTRALIJO. IMAM VEČ KOT DVAJSET LET IZKUŠENJE DELA VEČIJE BANK IN INVESTICIJSKE PODJETIJE. SEM POROČEN IN IMAM DVA SINA JAKE ŠTOLFA (1997) IN DANIEL ŠTOLFA (1999)



Eddie Štolfa

Firstly, I would like to emphasise that I am proud of my Slovenian heritage and I would consider it a great privilege to be recognised officially as a citizen of Slovenija.

Although I was born abroad soon after my parents immigrated from Slovenia, I was brought up as observing Slovene cultures and values. My first spoken language was Slovenian and most of my close relatives including my grandparents lived in Slovenia. My parents and my sister (my only sibling) are all citizens of Slovenia and I have travelled to Slovenia on several occasions during my life.

I grew up amongst the Slovenian community living in Melbourne, Australia. I attended Slovenian classes at Marybyrnong High School on Saturday mornings, and, as a youngster, I attended Slovenian classes held after mass at the Slovenian Catholic mission of St Cyril and Methodius in Kew, Melbourne, Australia. This was the first Slovenian church opened in Australia and it serves as the social and cultural centre in Melbourne for expatriate Slovenians. Here, I participated in Slovenian cultural plays, dances and songs for the community. My grandmother, Marcela Bole, was a well known poet within the community who recited her works here and amongst many Slovenian clubs and Associations. She published three books of Slovenian poetry and literature and was very active in the Slovenian community abroad. My parents, Josef and Danila Stolfá, have also been prominent members of the community. They have been very dedicated committee members of Slovensko Drustvo Melbourne for many years where they have made a valuable contribution to the Slovenian community locally. I was also an active member of the youth group of this club where I volunteered my services during the past. Other members of my family played in Slovenian musical bands and organised Slovenian representative sporting clubs in this community so the contribution from my family and the Slovenian way of life has been a fabric of my up-bringing. This has ultimately lead me to take the steps to complete my journey to become a Slovenian citizen finally.



Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Erin Bole

Age
Starost

23

Town
Mesto

Grovedale, Victoria

I AM SLOVENIAN TOO

Lake Bled, Soča Valley, Postojnska Jama, Predjama Castle and Škocjan Caves, *potica*, sauerkraut, goulash and family are a few things that come to mind when I think ‘Slovenian’. Slovenia has the most amazing tourist attractions in the world, yet many people don’t know where Slovenia is located. I had the privilege to travel to Slovenia with my parents when I was younger. Seeing a country which holds such an extensive history of my extended family and ancestors was a lifetime experience and one day I will return to explore even further. One of the many memories that will always remain in my mind, even after over a decade after traveling to Slovenia, is the picturesque hills and mountains, the land that was in my Stara Mama’s stories of ‘home’. Stara Mama’s home village of Stržišče was unlike anything I had seen before. Especially not here in Australia. So peaceful, environmentally friendly and beautiful.

I see Slovenians as very welcoming people who are largely family orientated and love to socialise over a large meal, like lots of laughing and conversation and don’t mind a shot of Pelinkovac or a glass of red wine. I always thoroughly enjoyed my Stara Mama’s cooking and always crave the Slovenian cuisine above any other foods. The local Slovenian Club in Geelong has the closest tasting meals to hers. Dad does a good job too at recreating his mother’s food and recipes. I must be Slovenian, I love my food.

I love listening to people speak Slovenian. Even though I only understand a handful of words and terms, I feel comfort in hearing the language spoken. I know that the language has been used within my family for generations. Hopefully one day in the near future I can speak and understand Slovenian to continue the language

through generations after mine.

After all, I am Slovenian too.

I believe the older Slovenian generations are some of the most courageous people who ever walked the earth. For those who witnessed the harsh sights of war first hand and continued to make their life the best possible, should be applauded and remembered. I have always shown interest in documentaries and movies referencing war because I feel as though it is a part of my heritage, and perhaps my grandparents wouldn’t have come to Australia to begin with if it wasn’t for the war. The underground bunkers located around Slovenia cannot be found in Australia. They are a little piece of history I love to share with people because Slovenia is my country and a part of my history that has shaped my family today.

Growing up and living in Australia has been rather smooth for myself. Having supermarkets to use to our convenience, easily accessible education for all and job availability has been a luxury for all Australian’s as opposed to those who were raised in Slovenia, specifically my grandparents’ generation.

I speak proudly of my Slovenian heritage, especially the food, the idyllic scenery and the tourist attractions that cannot be seen anywhere else in the world. When people ask me about my nationality I say Australian, then I continue to say I am a 3rd generation Slovenian. They ask “Slovenia? Where is that?” Despite extensive education in Australia, many have never heard of our country. I answer with “a small country next to Italy”. I could easily just say Italy, because then I wouldn’t have to explain that my father’s parents migrated in the 1950’s and I wouldn’t have to give a complex answer but that would be a lie because I am not Italian, Sem slovenska preveč. Hvala za branje.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Julija Čampelj

Age
Starost

46

Town
Mesto

Kurunjang, Victoria

I am Slovenian too!

I was born in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia to Slovenian migrants. My parents worked hard to make a loving and happy home for our family.

My earliest memories include listening to music by the famous Slovenian bands Avsenik and Slak as well as other Slovenian musicians. Mum always cooked a delicious three course meal which included noodle soup (juha), a main meal like beef stew with polenta (gulaš in polenta) and finally desert, yummy hot apple strudel. We always had people over, with homemade biscuits and cakes placed on the table. Dad entertained the guests with stories and jokes while mum played the hostess and made sure that the table was never empty.

Both my parents were 'do it yourself' people. Dad was a carpenter and changed rooms around in the house in the first few years they were living there. He also built sheds and a carport with assistance and kept on top of the maintenance of the house. Mum was not only a great cook and house keeper but she also established the garden and vegetable patch which she maintained while she could.

The children I went to school with would talk about playing some form of sport or going on some outing for the day. While I would be going to the Slovenian Club or the Slovenian Church most weekends. Both places taught me more about Slovenian culture, tradition and religion. It also taught me how to be a part of a community that provided friendship and support. I attended 'Slovenian School' where I learnt the language, singing and dancing. We performed on special occasions such as Mothers' and Fathers' Days and when St Nicholas visited. Music is a part of our family. Mum had told me

often how she loved to sing and whistle when she was young doing work around the family farm. She knew a lot of old songs and poems that other people did not know. Dad, mum and my sister, would often sing while doing the dishes. My sister and brother then formed a band with some family friends. They frequently performed at various clubs, Slovenian, German, Austrian and Dutch. I was always proud as they performed from the heart and made the guests dance and sing along with them.

When I was a young girl I went to Slovenia with my parents. It was the first time they had been back to their mother country in twenty years. Seeing my parents with their families was a very emotional and happy time. I was pleased to get to know the family and after a week of being shy I then never stopped speaking in Slovenian. Mum and dad had never seen the tourist sites before they boarded the ship for Australia. So we visited Lake Bled and the surrounds, Postojna Caves (Jama), Lipica where the Lipizzaner horses live and some castles (Grad). The age, beauty and history of these places instilled a sense of pride in me about my heritage.

Later when I a young adult, I visited Slovenia again with my parents and my brother. Our reason to visit this time was a sad one but we still enjoyed ourselves. As I walked around the villages where mum and dad came from I listened to the stories of how much my parents contributed to the community and how fond everyone was of them. I was very proud of my parents and hoped to follow in their footsteps.

I try to do this by being involved in the Slovenian Community here in Melbourne. I am driven by the dream of the club founders, to meet at a place to



Julija Čampelj *continued*

celebrate the Slovenian language and culture. This cannot be done without hard work and being a part of a great team.

Even in everyday life, I try to practice what has been instilled in me by my parents and my heritage, work hard, help others out, be respectful, enjoy life including music, food and socialising.

So yes “I am Slovenian too”.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Alannah Čušin

Age
Starost

22

Town
Mesto

Hampton, Victoria

I AM SLOVENIAN TOO – Alannah Čušin, 3rd generation Slovene.

Growing up, I was lucky enough to live overseas surrounded by nationalities from all over the world. I went to class with hundreds of Australians, but my brother and I were the only ones who could call themselves, ‘Slovene.’ When asked during a French class to make a poster about where we came from, I felt pretty special having two places to call home. I decided to present Slovenia to my classmates, and painted my poster in the Slovenian blue and green, and topped it off with a map I drew myself to make sure everyone knew where it was! I got top marks!

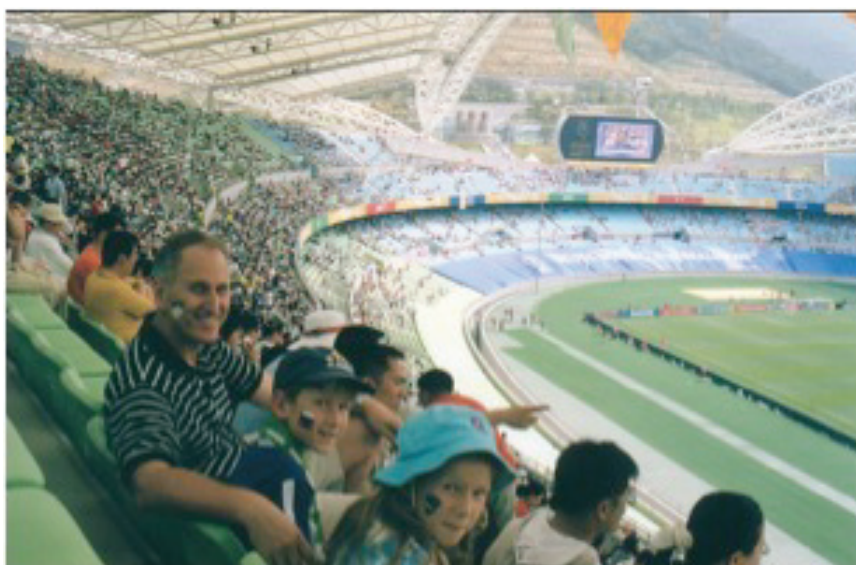
In 2002, while living in South Korea, my family and travelled to Daegu to watch the FIFA World Cup – South Africa v Slovenia! Unfortunately we didn’t have a lot to cheer about and Slovenia never scored a goal, but I went home happy with a new ‘Slovenija!’ scarf and Mount Triglav painted on my cheek!

On a family holiday when I was 13, Dad took us to Slovenia. It was always really important to him that my brother and I knew where we came from. Family is very important. Meeting the other Čušins as well as exploring the village my grandfather grew up in near Kobarid, was an incredible experience – and thanks to social media, I still keep in contact with my cousins today!

When we returned to Australia in 2008, having lunch at the Geelong Slovene Club became a regular event and I even tried to learn Slovene. Babica helped me as much as she could, and found me books to read... unfortunately Babica could only find books 2 and 3, so without Book 1 I’m didn’t get very far. One day though, I hope to spend enough time in Ljubljana to learn the language properly!

Soon, I’ll be using my Slovene passport when I travel to Europe for my university studies. I am currently doing my Honours year and writing a thesis on the Yugoslav Wars as well as a smaller essay on Slovenia’s independence movement. Travelling back to Slovenia on my own and being able to explore the country for myself is something I’m really looking forward to.

But for now, I’m mastering the family Potica recipe for the next Eurovision party!



*2002 FIFA World Cup!
Left to Right: Lex Čušin (father), Jordan Čušin (brother), Alannah Čušin (me!)*



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Eric Gelt

Age
Starost

43

Town
Mesto

Elwood, Victoria

I am a Slovenian too

My first memories of Slovenia are when I was five with my parents and sister. I returned to Australia and I had lost my English words.

The Slovenian culture has always been a large part of my childhood, especially as the son of the Slovenian teacher! I had Saturday school every Saturday, folk dancing every Sunday and performed three times a year. This provided some great opportunities to have fun with friends and some great experiences, including dancing in the AFL Grand Final half-time spectacular at the MCG in 1989 as part of a celebration of multi-cultural Melbourne.

When Slovenia made the world cup in 2002 and 2010, I wore the Slovenian colours and cheered for them. I was especially proud when Slovenia beat Russia to qualify.

Slovenia's food pervades my every day life and I am passing on to my children my love of *schnitzel*, *čevapčiči*, *kranskies* and *potica*, to name a few.

I took my own family to Slovenia for five weeks in 2009 and shared Slovenia with them – my mum's family in the picturesque capital of Ljubljana and their love of the Slovenian countryside, climbing the lower hills of the Slovenian Alps, rowing across Lake Bled, and exploring the beaches of Portorož, Piran, the 'spas' or giant swimming playgrounds around the country, and my dad's hometown of Velika Polana, not to mention, the incredible storks and their nests that sat precariously atop the power poles.

My mum has always ensured that while we are in Australia that we do not lose touch with our Slovenian cultural heritage and I will do the same for my children.

Yes, I am a Slovenian too.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Danijela Hliš

Age
Starost

64

Town
Mesto

Hobart, Tasmania

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO – but of course, although I am the first to admit that I have forgotten this fact a few times. First, of course, there was Yugoslavia, and I was born in 1949. Then, there was my migration out of mother country, to many new countries, and assimilation was necessary to survive. Then there was my marriage to a Frenchman, and later to a German. But through it all, I continued to speak and write and publish in Slovenian. I was not reading much in my mother tongue, nor was I listening to Slovenian music, and knew nothing of our food, because I had to stay fluent in French English, Italian and Spanish for my work and I was sure I will never forget Slovenian! I lived in so many countries as a “migrant”, my origins were not so important at times.

In 1996 my family migrated to Australia as well and my Slovenian heritage was refreshed, my love for our music and dance was reignited through my father and mother who were living with me in Tasmania. I had to learn to cook Slovenian food and luckily had my younger brother and sister nearby, and their families, to help with suggestions. I took great pride teaching my nephew Lucas, together with his parents and grandparents, and found so much joy in his conversations with us in Slovenian. It is fantastic to have a bi lingual, bi cultural little boy in one's family!

During my working life in Sydney and Melbourne, I was an active member of Slovenian community and contributor to our publications. There are not many Slovenians in Tasmania so we try our best to meet at times and share a strudel or a song, like *Oj mladost ti moja...* In Slovenia too, I am included as a writer

in many books, and RTV Maribor and Ljubljana have done quite a few documentaries on me and my writing.

What does it mean to be of Slovenian origin is a hard question and I don't really have a good answer; I am sure every one has a different feeling about this. Slovenia is a beautiful country, the natural wonders are still so undiscovered by me because I left my country of birth at 18. Our cultural heritage is just as great and deserving of respect as any other in the world and I hope to learn more of it now that I am retiring and while in my sixties, hopefully still healthy enough to visit Slovenia and learn from its inhabitants. Are they proud of their homeland? Do they treasure living in Slovenia? That is the question!

Here in Tasmania, I live in a totally multicultural family and society and I am happy to say that I live in the hope of a peaceful, harmonious co- existence of all nationalities and cultures of the world. I am proud of being a caring, compassionate, hard working human being, (nationality is not important) and I will continue to work for inclusion of all people in our community. I invite all those born to Slovenian parents to find out all they can about their heritage; it is so empowering, so enriching, to have Slovenian and Australian heritage/culture. Even if you had not had a chance to learn the Slovenian language, learn now to say

DOBER DAN,
RADA VAS IMAM,
HVALA,
SREČNO,
VSE DOBRO VAM ŽELIM,
NAJ ŽIVI SVOBODA!



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Lydia Markič

Age
Starost

43

Town
Mesto

Croydon, Victoria

I AM SLOVENIAN TOO

Being born to migrant Slovenian parents, I ask myself what has that meant to me?

I was lucky to be brought up by parents who embraced both cultures, Australian and Slovenian. They spoke both languages, mum better than dad. So I always understood both. I have always known their stories of poverty, hardship and escaping a communist country and where their desire for a better life and hard work took them.

My earliest memories are of times that we spent at "the Club" (Slovenian Association Melbourne). My parents were both very involved in the start up of the Club so as a child I went along. I remember when the Club was just "Korosceva Koca" and in the cake display unit there was always apple strudel, potica and doughnuts. I was allowed to run around and play on the many hectares of land, as my parents worked on building the hall, bocce shed, hunter's lodge and school. They knew I was in a safe environment and I only really saw them when I wanted something to eat or drink or it was time to go home.

Some of my lifelong friendships were made during this time. Playing with the other kids, whose parents were also volunteers working, building the Club. On Saturday nights there was often a function or dance. My parents had a station wagon and put blankets in the back so that when we got tired, we could go to sleep in the car. I preferred to pull a few chairs together at the table and lay there until I fell asleep, watching the "grown-ups" dance and spin round and round on the dance floor.

Once the school opened, Sundays were

Slovenian school. I started to learn the language, reading and writing and a lot of the school time was spent learning poems and plays for the cultural concerts. I spent years on that stage. Reciting poems and participating in plays, doing character actions to "mums hanging out washing" and dressing up in national costume for folk dancing. I even had my own national costume and remember ladies sewing all the sequence and gold on the hats. My mum bought me my very own. As a child, trying to keep that big hat on my head was a balancing act. I didn't only wear it for folk dancing, but also for official functions, greeting officials with the Slovenian flower, a carnation.

From playing netball and bocce during festivals, to performing in the concerts, As I grew into my teenage years the folk dancing became fun. For me, it was spending time with my friends. I think we drove Mrs Gelt and Mrs Pisotek (our teachers) crazy at times. We learnt many different dances from different provinces in Slovenia. I remember the boys stomping on the stage so hard during one of them, that we thought the stage may fall down. I think we all learnt to overcome nerves on stage by having fun. One time we did have so much fun, we forgot our steps, the curtain closed and we had to start again. From the traditional dancing, we moved into modern dancing. I was a cat, a chicken, a marching girl, a cancan girl, just to name a few.

Through the association with other clubs and inter club festivals and activities, our dancing group travelled to not only other Melbourne clubs but also to Sydney, Canberra and Adelaide. These bus trips were a highlight. I got to travel at 14 or 15, on interstate bus trips with my friends.



Lydia Markič *continued*

Due to my parents' involvement, I also became involved. I was a member of the youth committee. This committee organized events such as the annual snow trip and the running of the kitchen at Mother's Day lunches. I think back to the responsibility that was given to us (with some adult supervision) to cooking, serving food, dealing with money and serving drinks behind the bar. It was young and old working together and mixing together. No age barrier.

I learnt to waitress at formal functions and balls; prepare platters for serving; prepare food at the back of the kitchen and prepare and setup for functions. Even the cleaning before functions and after functions was actually fun. I was with friends, so working didn't feel like work.

I travelled to Slovenia twice as a child. I have fond memories of meeting a whole new family and relatives and my parents showing me where they came from. My parents always spoke both languages so I was able to communicate, although a little shy incase I made mistakes. Living there for three months at a time there was no flushing toilet, no telephone; chickens running around the yard (which later became lunch); cows in the stable for daily milk. The butchers and supermarkets were so small with very little produce. Even toilet paper and basic essentials were hard to get so my aunties used to travel to Italy to stock up on what to me were basic items. Even at my young age I saw poverty and how communism affected the people. Everywhere we went in public places there was a picture of Tito. I used to ask my cousins why they had pictures of this man everywhere. They always told me to be quiet or I could get myself, and them, into a lot of trouble. I couldn't really

comprehend the idea of not having freedom of speech. When we were riding our bikes in the village, they were all scared of the police so quickly rode away if they saw them. I had been brought up in a society where police were there to help us. It gave me an appreciation that my parents did succeed in making a better life for themselves. I was lucky enough to travel to Slovenia with them again four years ago, this time with my own children, and see such a beautiful country through adult eyes.

So what does being Slovenian mean to me? It gave me opportunity, experience, confidence and growth. I learnt from a very young age what can be achieved from hard volunteer work, all working together, with a sense of community and belonging that became the success of the club.

My parents' heart is Slovenian. I have been extremely fortunate to be brought up by them while they gave so much time and effort to the Slovenian community. Having my own family, I am amazed how they ever had the time to give so much. They managed to get a balance between embracing Australia as their home, being proud of their roots and keeping their Slovenian heritage and traditions. They passed this on to me and hopefully I have to my children. Heritage and family history is what moulds us and makes us who we are and destines our future.

I am proud to be Slovenian.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Tatjana Mohar

Age
Starost

54

Town
Mesto

Geelong, Victoria

I am Slovenian too

Dober Dan! Kako si? Dobro Hvala!

My favourite words and sound. This resonates with me and instantly brings back memories from my childhood. I might be walking down the street and I hear the Slovenian language and without hesitation I stop and say to total strangers, "Hi, I'm Slovenian too."

In an instant they respond with, "Where are you from?" Or "Where do your parents come from?"

Culture is such an important part of who we are and who we've become. Every experience we encounter, every person we meet in our lives influences us in some way. All our experiences are embedded into our character.

I'm so proud of being Slovenian.

I'm Slovenian because of my love of music, dancing, food and the Arts. We have a love of cooking and baking. Our food is very rustic, fresh, healthy, satisfying and flavoursome.

We are a much organised systematic race. A very proud and loyal race.

I enjoy speaking Slovenian it does something to the soul. It transforms me into A Slovenian. It empowers me and gives me a sense of identity. It reflects and transcends and makes me appreciate my family and Parental heritage.

Learning another language extends the opportunity for communication, appreciation of differences and supports inclusiveness. It introduces you to new people and many other cultures. It helps you appreciate and understand other cultures.

Many years ago I was fortunate enough to visit Slovenia. The memory is still etched into my memory. The sheer beauty of the country / landscape, the amazing hospitality of the people. So friendly and open minded. Unbelievable openness. I'm so glad my parents forced me to learn the language because now I feel a better person for it. I'm more learned, I feel more connected to the culture and I have a deeper understanding of who I am.

Cultural events are interesting, historical and fascinating... I love being around Slovenians. The moment I walk through the doors at my Slovenian Club, I feel instantly accepted and understood.



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Belinda Stopar

Age
Starost

43

Town
Mesto

Camberwell, Victoria

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO

When I was a little girl I used to sit on my mother's knee and say "Mummy I want to go home" and she'd say "But darling you are home". This happened a few times and I never really knew what it meant back then or why I felt that way until I went to Slovenia and as I sat on a train admiring the beautiful landscape I realised for the first time that finally I was home.

My father is from Slovenia and escaped from the communist regime like so many emigrants, my mother is from Croatia but we were not brought up speaking our parent's language because in those days the 'wog' stigma was very prevalent in Australia and my mother had heard that children brought up speaking another language didn't do as well in school and also back then free English classes weren't given to immigrants so it helped my mother with her English as well. Now it's a decision we both regret but I have met others my age from different nationalities who are in the same position, so it was just a reflection of the times and our parents doing what they thought would be best for us to assimilate as 1st generation Australians.

I didn't give much more thought about my Slovenian heritage growing up until for purely selfish reasons I decided to obtain Slovenian Citizenship for that all important EU passport so that I could legally work in London as I was too old for the UK working holiday visa, although I had already obtained that when I was the 'right age'. Also considering how small the population is I thought every extra person counts right? ;-). Suddenly when I got my citizenship and passport and was officially Slovenian I felt a sense of pride and responsibility. Also at that time another impetus for me wanting to take out citizenship was that Janez Drnovšek was President and as

a vegan I was immensely proud that Slovenia was the first country in the world (that I knew of) to have a head of state who was a vegan, how forward thinking is that? I might add too on this aspect how pleasantly surprised I was to accidentally and purposely find so many vegetarians and vegans, but how could you not be one over there with such bountiful nature everywhere which is at one with their lives and being. Almost every single person grows their own vegetables so in that regard it's a vegetarians paradise.

My first trip to Slovenia was in 1991 and since the war was on we were advised not to travel anywhere, so since we were in Venice my partner and I just did a quick pop in to my father's village not far from the Italian border to meet my only living grandparent for a couple of days. Around 10 years later when I went to Croatia to visit my mother who was holidaying there at the time, we also made a quick visit to see my father's brothers and visit my grandmother's grave and see Ljubljana for a couple of hours. Several years after that with my new Slovenian passport I entered again for another brief visit with father, same thing with just a couple of hours in Ljubljana but this time we spent a couple of nights in his family home. This trip was special as my father being a typical 'reserved' Slovenian ;-)) had never told me about his childhood and why and how he escaped from Slovenia so it was wonderful to walk around his village with him and hear stories about all this and of his neighbours and schooldays etc. 2 things clicked with me on this visit, firstly since I now was entering Slovenia with their passport I was being spoken to in Slovenian and I didn't know the language and secondly as we walked past Tivoli Park on the way to a vegetarian restaurant, whilst we waited for my uncle to drive from near Nova Gorica to pick us up in Ljubljana,



Belinda Stopar *continued*

I got a great feel about the place and knew with certainty that I wanted to come back soon and spend more time to get to know it better. 3 years later I did both in one hit. I came back on my own to spend 2 months to explore my country. The first month was studying the language at the summer school and the second month I had planned to do day trips and short stays from Ljubljana, but I loved Ljubljana so much I spent most of that 2nd month getting to know the city in depth and just being. I wanted to continue with the language studies and actually get out of Ljubljana to see the rest of the country so I organised to go back the following year to do it all again. This time after my course had finished my partner joined me and we hired a campervan and discovered the spectacular scenery and picturesque towns. Slovenians were puzzled as to how we could spend a month travelling around as they thought you could see the whole small country in a week or two at the most, but we only really saw the west part in detail. As I write this we are planning our next trip back next month, again with another campervan for a month but this time to explore the eastern part. Coincidentally the day these essays will be displayed here in Melbourne is the day I fly into my beloved Slovenia. Then the next day I will embark on my first day of a one week tango academy with my favourite tango couple in the world, who just happen to be Slovenian. This will be my third one with them. This time one of my dance partners from Melbourne will join me for it and I am looking forward to introducing him to my favourite country and am sure he will fall in love with it too.

My ultimate dream would be to spend 6 months here and 6 months there in summer and spring, that would make me the happiest women in the world, lack of finances may prevent this

from happening, but one can still dream right? In fact I think this may be the only way I can learn to speak the language properly as I don't get to practise it here and when I'm there their English is perfect so they end up speaking that to me, even when I try to speak to them in Slovenian, so my current little Slovenian is obviously not convincing enough.

So why do I feel like I am Slovenian too? I must admit I have found it hard to find good friends here but in my short time in Slovenia I have made many true friends who I feel a deeper connection with than people here. When I am there I look like them, here people ask me if I'm Italian or from South America, also my surname is unusual here but over there it's not questioned. If there was a sporting competition between Slovenia and Australia I would barrack for Slovenia (also their population is so much smaller so they need as much support as possible ;-). Most importantly I feel an instant connection and oneness with the land and its people and I can't help but keep getting drawn to go back as often as I can. The Slovenians we met on our trip were so hospitable, friendly and would go out of their way to help you. I tell everyone they must visit Slovenia and even write out an itinerary for them and send them photos to encourage them and advise them this is one country they must visit before they die!

My partner is from Ireland which is also known as being one of the most beautiful countries in the world, but even he had to admit that Slovenia was more beautiful and reminded him of the Ireland he knew growing up. I have to say he feels a little Slovenian too after our trip there, in fact I think anyone who has visited Slovenia can't help to feel that they are a bit Slovenian as well, how could you not?



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Anna Tegelj nee **Mandelj**

Age
Starost

59

Town
Mesto

Watsonia North, Victoria

I Am Slovenian Too

Where to begin, I suppose from the beginning. I was born to Slovenian parents who migrated to Australia in the early 1950's. They were married in St John's Clifton Hill and not long after I came along and 4 years later my sister Maria.

During my childhood we associated mainly with Slovenians and I spoke mainly Slovenian till I started school. The love of Slovenia and its culture was instilled in us at an early age, I still remember the first record we received from Slovenia that my grandfather sent, it was *Rdeči cvet* it was played over and over again.

Later in the early 1970's we started our involvement with the Slovenian clubs and in particular Slovenian Association Melbourne where I participated in many functions over the years and still do. It was never a problem to put on my Slovenian national costume and I always felt a sense of pride when I wore it. When I was asked to help work in the Library at SDM by Milena Brgoč I was most happy to do so, for I have a great love of books.

For a short period of time I was on Slovenian radio 3EA with Janja Lavrič and then moved across to a Friday night multicultural program for a few years.

In the 1970's I was in a band called *Sava* with my sister Maria Hervatin, Lil Conlan (Prosen) her sister Lorraine Ivančič and Alex Razboršek (and also over the years with changes of members Robert Everest and Danny Simšič.) We were very lucky to be the first Australian Slovenian band to play in Slovenia at the *Izseljenski Piknik* in Škofja Loka in 1978. For which we are very proud of.

Now I am in a band called *Rdeči cvet* with my sister Maria, Lil and Helen Trinnich (Čampelj), we love playing and performing Slovenian traditional songs and seeing the enjoyment it gives to our older Slovenians. With great pride Helen and I also perform the Slovenian and Australian National Anthems at various functions and also have taken part in numerous Slovenian Youth concerts.

A few years back I was asked to join the Kew Slovenian Drama Group, with which I participate with much enjoyment, my Slovenian has improved no end and I have learned many new cultural facts.

In the 1980's I was lucky enough to meet my now husband Janko Tegelj in Geelong, where else, but at a function held at the Slovenian Club. We married and had 2 boys Martin and Stefan. Both have been involved with SDM from an early age where they performed at concerts, would lend a helping hand etc. Later they joined the Slovenian dance group *Iskra* where they performed not only in Victoria but interstate as well.

Over the years I have visited Slovenia many times and have enjoyed its wonderful landscapes, history, food and people. Each time I go, it surprises me with what it has to offer for such a small country.

How do I FEEL about being born of Slovenian parents,
well,

I have much love for Slovenia, its culture and my Slovenian heritage, and I feel that I have also instilled that love and pride to my children.

Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Adrian Vatovec

Age
Starost

Town
Mesto

Adelaide, South Australia

Two Streams

Slovenian migrants were one of over fifty countries that passed through Bonegilla reception centre between 1947 and 1971, before being dispersed to other areas in Australia to build a new life. Many people started their Australian life at Bonegilla, including my mother Leopolda who also gave birth to me at the centre.

Bonegilla was the largest migrant reception centre in post World War II Australia where during its twenty four year history more than three hundred thousand people passed and today, when considering spouses and children, has a direct impact on over 1 million people in Australia. Bonegilla, situated in the precinct of the twin cities of Albury Wodonga on the Victorian and New South Wales border celebrated its 65th Anniversary in 2012 as a migrant camp. Today, Block 19, the last surviving block at the Bonegilla Migrant Centre, was given heritage listing in 2002 and is managed now by Parklands Albury-Wodonga.

The word Bonegilla is Aboriginal, from the Koori people, and it means “place of the meeting waters”. This is a symbolic location to hold a migrant reception centre where you have an immigrant and an Australian culture meeting and sometimes colliding. It is with this description that I introduce my song “Two Streams”. It is about living and growing with two cultures. The accordion in the song represents the Slovenian way of life and the piano, the Australian way of life.

This song is dedicated to our Slovenian immigrants, who have significantly contributed to Australia’s social and economic prosperity, since first setting foot on Australian soil.

Two Streams
blood flows through my veins
from two streams it’s fed
from two valleys bled
viewed from the air
your mother saw the lights
the first of the southern sky

and the accordion
sounds a way of life
from two streams
the piano
echoes in the hall
from two streams

through the rocky seas
calm water brings to rest
your mother’s lioness chest
pressure in the air
a contract to uphold
village life is sold

and the accordion
sounds a way of life,
from two streams,
the piano
echoes in the hall,
from two streams

imagination packed in a suitcase
along with every dream
census up but never shows
emotion lines, battle bars
you blow me away

asked a child of yours
where did she get her smile?
the strength that’s in his bones?
blood flows through my veins



Adrian Vatovec *continued*

from two streams it's fed
the journey never ends

NOTE: Adrian Vatovec requested to be included in the E- book only and not in the Essay competition.

and the accordion
sounds a way of life,
from two streams,
the piano
echoes in the hall,
from two streams,
blood flows through my veins
from two streams.

Two Streams

words and music Adrian Vatovec

♩ = 90

Gm Bb/F Dm Am/D F Gm
blood flows through my
6 Bb/F Dm F Gm
viens from two streams it's fed from two val leys bled viewed from the
10 Bb/F Dm Am/D F Gm7 F/A
air your mo-ther saw the lights the first of soth-ern sky and the ac - cor - - dion
14 F C Gm7 Am F Gm7 F/A F C
sounds a way of life from two streams the pia - no e-choos in the hall
19 Gm7 Am F Gm/E Dm6 C6 C Gm
from two streams through the ro-cky
24 Bb/F Dm F Gm
seas calm wa-ter brings to rest your mo-ther's lio-ness chest pres - sure in the
28 Bb/F Dm Am/D F Gm7 F/A
air a con-tract to up-hold vil-lage life is sold and the ac - cor - dion
32 F C Gm7 Am F Gm7 F/A F C
sounds a way of life from two streams the pia - no e-chos in the hall
37 Gm7 Am F G C
41 F C G Dm F C
long with e-very dream cen-sus u but ve-ver shows e - mo-tion lines



Adrian Vatovec *continued*

2

46 Gm F Gm/E Dm Dm⁷ C Gm Bb/F
bat-tle scars you blow me a - way asked a child of yours where did she get her

51 Dm F Gm Bb/F
smile? the strength that's in his bones? blood flows through my veins from two streams it's

55 Dm F C Gm⁷ F/A F C
fed the jour-ney ne-ver ends and the ac - cor - dion sounds a way of life

60 Gm⁷ Am F Gm⁷ F/A F C Gm⁷ Am F Gm/E
from two streams the pia - no e-chos in the hall from two streams

66 Gm/D C⁶ C Gm F/A Bb/D C F Fine
blood flows through my veins from two streams

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Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Katarina Vrisk

Age
Starost

50

Town
Mesto

Oakleigh, Victoria

I AM SLOVENIAN TOO

I didn't really know the meaning of being Slovenian as well as Australian until I stepped on what was then Yugoslav soil, accompanied by my parents, as a 12 year old girl in 1975. This was my first visit and living so far away in Australia meant I didn't know any of my relatives. I met my cousins, aunties, uncles and more distant relatives during this visit. Even though these people were strangers to me, I felt part of them, and they welcomed me as one of them. I was part of a much larger network of people than I had in Australia (especially as I had no brothers or sisters).

I came back to Australia with my beautiful 'spominska knjiga' a changed person. I wrote to lots of my relatives for quite some years. I knew the Slovenian language because my parents spoke it and their friends too, however, I think it was because my ears are attuned to sound, being a musician. I picked up through others and was keen to try myself. My relatives must have had a laugh about these letters and my attempts but they always appreciated my efforts.

After completing a university degree in teaching and working for three years, I returned to Slovenia in 1989. Slovenia was still a republic of Yugoslavia and inflation was extremely high. After travelling to the United States of America and then through 13 different countries in Europe, Slovenia was a welcome relief and something 'familiar'. I found on this visit, I was much more interested in knowing about the history of my family and my ancestors. I was lucky enough to be there for a double wedding – a twin brother and sister who married their respective partners, one being my cousin, Janez. There were traditional customs like

'šranganje' at both bride's houses and the then obligatory civil ceremony soon followed by the church ceremony, led by one of my relatives.

In 2013 I turned 50 and as a gift to myself, I planned to go back to Slovenia and visit my relatives. It had been 24 years since I'd last visited and now Slovenia is an independent country. I also wanted to take my 10 year old son to meet his relatives and show him the beautiful country of Slovenia. I was curious to see how the country had changed in 22 years of independence and now part of the European Union.

My son and I were both excited. It was a great adventure, learning experience and emotional journey. We arrived in Vienna and stayed a night with the family of my cousin's son, before travelling to Slovenia the next day. We stopped at the border (Šentilj) where the sign 'Slovenija' in the EU symbol stood proud, so we could have a photograph there. It was so peaceful and 'abandoned' as I recollected, in 1989, there were soldiers with machine guns on the border. Now there was nothing...

That night, after having a welcoming party, we spent our first night at my aunty and uncle's house. I asked my son what were his first impression of Slovenia, now that he'd spent one day there. He said, 'Mum, they have cars and buses here!' It made me realise that I must have only shown him pictures of scenery – mountains and forests! I felt good that I had persevered to bring him here and show him not only the country, but also show that he was a part of a much bigger family than he had thus far known in Australia. He said he would return one day and I said I would do that soon too; both of us feeling we are Slovenian too.

Lego Competition entries and photos



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Sabrina Johnson

Age
Starost

7

Town
Mesto

Templestowe, Victoria



First Prize



Slovenian School





Sabrina Johnson other entries



Sabrina receiving the winning prize



House



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Leah Mae Gelt

Age
Starost

7

Town
Mesto

Elwood, Victoria



Second Prize



Emmet and Friends



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Oscar Krnel

Age
Starost

7

Town
Mesto

Ballarat, Victoria



Third Prize



My Ferrafi



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Sienna Pišotek

Age
Starost

7

Town
Mesto

Park Orchards, Victoria



Commendable



Pet Day spa



Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Marcus Katsoulotos

Age
Starost

9

Town
Mesto

Balwyn, Victoria



First Prize

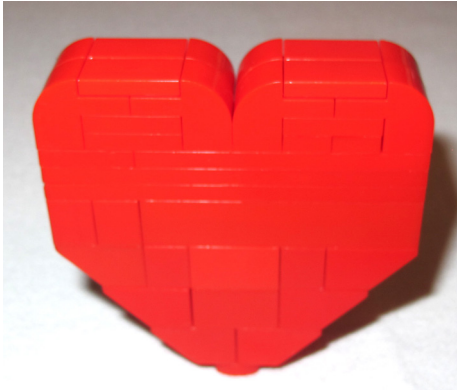


Racing car





Marcus Katsoulotos -



Heart for Mothers' Day



Marcus's Mother receiving his First Prize



Motorised Four Wheel Drive Crawler

Batman's cars





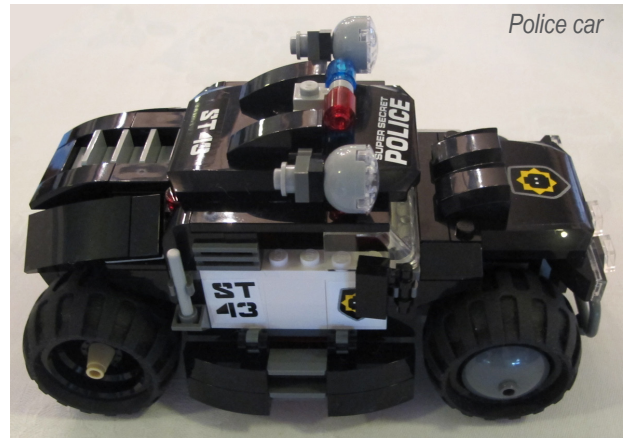
Marcus Katsoulotos -



R2-D2



Batman's car



Police car



Assylum



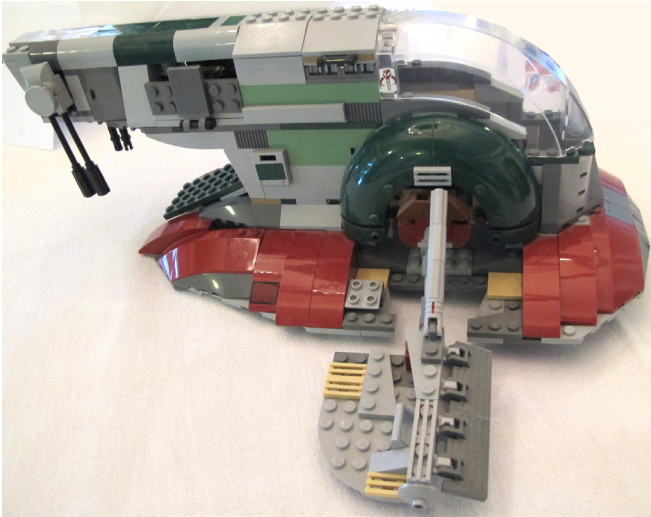
Marcus Katsoulotos -



More batman' cars



Marcus Katsoulotos - other entries



Robots



Space Station

Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Mia Pišotek

Age
Starost

9

Town
Mesto

Park Orchards, Victoria



Second Prize



My Boat



House



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Alex Pišotek

Age
Starost

10

Town
Mesto

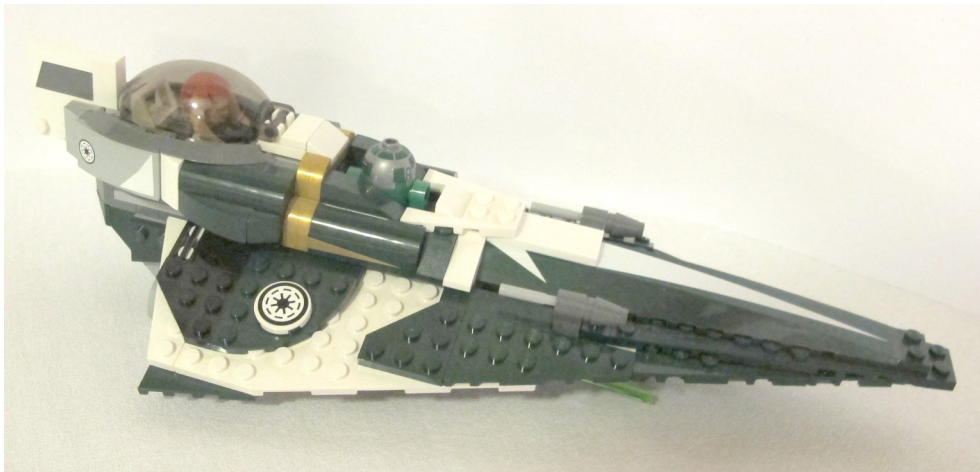
Park Orchards, Victoria



Third Prize



Helicopter



Spacecraft



Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Evie Johnson

Age
Starost

9

Town
Mesto

Templestowe, Victoria



Encouragement Award



Evie with her Mother receiving the prize



Anne's, Peter's and Olivia's House



Jeremy Ryff

Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Jeremy Ryff

Age
Starost

16

Town
Mesto

Mooroolbark, Victoria



First Prize



Slovenian Flag

Age: 13-17



Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Ashleigh Ryff

Age
Starost

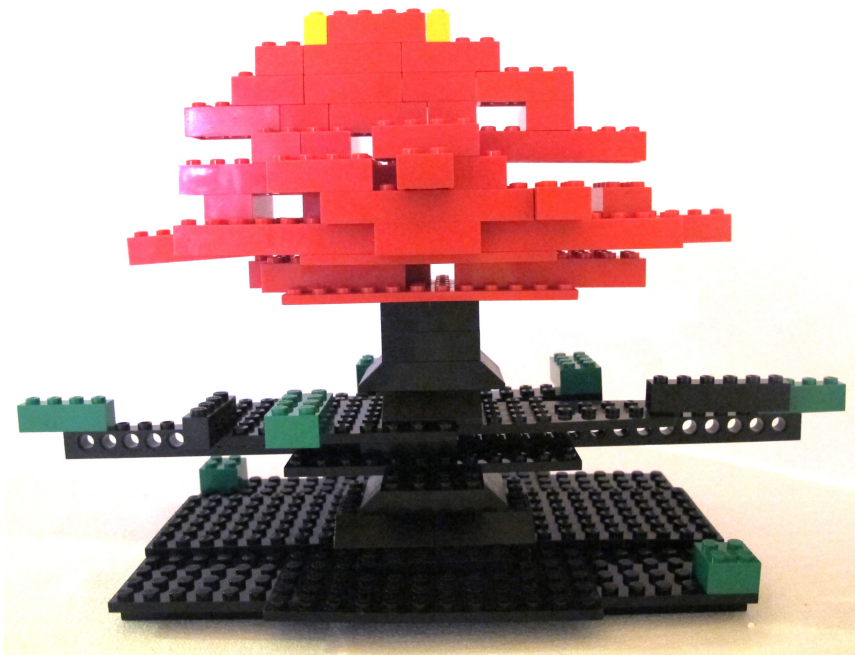
19

Town
Mesto

Mooroolbark, Victoria



First Prize



Carnation, Slovenian National Flower



Ashleigh receiving the prize



Frances Ryff

Name & Surname
Ime in primek

Frances Ryff nee Gelt

Age
Starost

39

Town
Mesto

Mooroolbark, Victoria



Second Prize



Mt Triglav, Aljaž's Tower

Name & Surname
Ime in priimek

Julija Čampelj

Age
Starost

46

Town
Mesto

Kurunjang, Victoria



Third Prize



Slovenian Boy



Julija receiving her prize



Slovenian Hayrack



Impressions of the Exhibition



Coordinators: Dragica Gomizel, Vivien Katsoulotos, Draga Gelt; judges: Andrej Potočnik and Magda Pišotek and the President Frances Urbas-Johnson





Setting up the Exhibition







List of Winners

Essay and Lego competition, June 22nd, 2014

I AM A SLOVENIAN TOO – TUDI JAZ SEM SLOVENEK/SLOVENKA

WINNERS essays:

Up to 7 years

Leah Gelt, 7 1st prize
Sienna Pišotek, 7 2nd prize

8-12 years

Alex Pišotek, 10 1st prize
Evie Johnson, 9 2nd prize
Mia Pišotek, 8 3rd prize
Daniel Bogovič, 8 commendable
Thomas Scott, 11 encouragement

13-17 years

Jeremy Ryff, 16 1st prize
Julia Markič Smith, 13 2nd prize
Lucas Hliš, 13 3rd prize
Natasha Žagar 16 encouragement

Adult:

Zalika Rizmal 1st prize
Vivien Boosz Falež 2nd prize
Andrej Potočnik 3rd prize
Lenti Lenko highly commendable
Rachel Lenko honourable mention
Sandra Krnel commendable
Frances Ryff commendable
Megan Lowe commendable
Silvia Žele essay in Slovenian language
Ashleigh Ryff encouragement

WINNERS Lego:

Up to 7 years

Sabrina Johnson 1st prize
Leah Gelt 2nd prize
Oscar Krnel 3rd prize
Sienna Pišotek encouragement award

8-12 years

Marcus Katsoulotos 1st prize (extremely talented, master of the Lego)
Mia Pišotek 2nd prize
Alex Pišotek 3rd prize
Evie Johnson encouragement award

13-17 years

Jeremy Ryff 1st prize

Adult

Ashleigh Ryff 1st prize
Frances Ryff 2nd prize
Julija Čampelj 3rd prize



Recipients of prizes and awards said:

Children essays and Lego:

Alexander Pišotek:

I was proud to be part of the Essay and Lego Competition. I thought it was a really great idea to have such an interesting competition.

I didn't expect to win, but it was a surprise to receive a prize.

I am happy to say that I enjoy being a part of the Slovenian tradition and ancestry roots.

In our house we have a large photo of myself and my two sisters in Slovenian national costumes, which is a lovely reminder of who we are!

Mia Pišotek:

I enjoyed going into the competitions and thought it was a good idea. I was surprised I got 3rd Prize in the essay and came second in the Lego Competition.

Receiving the book and a packet of Nanoblocks was a treat.

I am proud to be part of a Slovenian family and I am always finding out new things about my heritage.

Sienna Pišotek:

I love building with Lego and was excited when my Oma told me about the competition. I also wrote about Slovenia and why I think that I am a Slovenian too.

I was very happy to receive a commendable for my lego "Pet Salon" and for my writing I came second and received a book. Thank you.

Natasha Žagar:

I am very happy that my short story will be included in the book. Thank you for the prize as well, Nasha.

Thomas says:

I am glad I entered. I did it for my mum and grandparents

Marcus Katsoulotos:

I love building Lego so I was really happy that I won.

Lucas Hliš:

When I was told that I had won the third prize in the competition, I was really excited. Then when I got a parcel and my auntie told me that must be from Ms Draga Gelt, and I found a fantastic book and a certificate for me, I was really happy. Thank you.

Evie Johnson:

I felt proud of myself of trying out a thing I don't usually do. I wasn't expecting to win anything but I got two prizes. I got a book 'Dork Diaries' and some Lego pieces that builds a koala. I felt happy. I came second for the essay and I got an encouragement award. My sister Sabrina won first prize for Lego and got a Sydney Opera House Lego pieces prize.

Leah Gelt:

I was very happy to come first in the essay competition and second in Lego competition for my age. I like winning. Thank you.

Oscar Krnel:

I am very happy that I won 3rd prize for Lego.

Thank you to the Club for the competition, my lovely prize and certificates.



Receipients of prizes and awards said (*continued*):

Julia Markič-Smith:

I was happy to participate in the Essay competition 'I Am Slovenian Too' and to have placed 2nd, receiving a certificate and a novel. Being one of the participants in this writing competition made me explore Slovenian roots deeper and made me more aware of my family's background as well as it being a great opportunity to use some of my writing skills. Thanks to Mrs Draga Gelt for coming up with the idea and organizing the event.

Jeremy Ryff:

In writing my "I am a Slovenian Too" essay, it brought back many great memories of my visit to Slovenia in 2009. I love the country and loved writing about it, and was very surprised and proud to receive 1st place for my age group. Thank you.

For my "Slovenian flag" made of Lego I received 1st place once again and was very happy and had fun constructing it.

Adults - Essays and Lego:

Silvia Žele:

One of the benefits of these types of writing competitions is that they provide a good reason to sit and reflect on the past.

Megan Lowe:

I would like to give a special thanks to my grandparents, Tony and Josephine Mikus who have enriched my life with Slovene culture because of a brave move to search for a more prosperous life after the war. I will hold their memories of Slovenia in my heart always.

Andrej Potočnik:

I was very surprised to receive a prize for my response to the challenge of 'I am a Slovenian too', to which I took an alternative angle to the statement, looking at it as a question and what it means to be a Slovenian.

As a descendant of Slovenian parents, and very proud to be so, I feel that pride isn't always something one shows with a flag, the wearing of a national costume or reminiscing about 'potica', each of which means a lot to me (even though I've never worn the 'narodna nosa', not to be confused with a 'clumsy costume', albeit just by an incorrectly placed emphasis in pronunciation).

Pride in one's heritage is carried in one's heart, but we cannot forget where we live, whether we are Australians or Slovenians. The call is a difficult one.

Vivien Boosz Falež:

Thank you for awarding my entry the Second Prize in the Adult Section of the Essay Competition. Hosting the competition such as you have done, provides us with the possibility to hear each others' voices and to recognise the similarities that exist between us. It was the experiences and emotions from my childhood which inspired my entry, and these may resonate for other first, second, third and probably now fourth generation Slovenian Australians.

It is with great interest that I will read the winning entry of Essay Competition.

Receipients of prizes and awards said (*continued*):

I am grateful to both my parents and in particular my father who stubbornly hoped that Slovenia would become an independent nation of which we could all be proud. I certainly am.

Frances Ryff:

On receiving my award of commendment for the essay "I am a Slovenian Too", I was very surprised. Writing it, made me think about my heritage, and wanting to one day return there to experience more culture, visit family and enjoy the welcome by everyone.

I also received 2nd price for my Aljaž tower (Mt Triglav) in the Lego competition; this was lots of fun making and I was very proud to receive the award.

Sandra Krnel:

Thank you to the Slovenian Association Melbourne and organisers for the opportunity to enter our Essays about being a Slovenian.

I am proud of my heritage and, although I hesitated to participate, I am glad I was able to write about my life in this beautiful community

Ashleigh Ryff:

I received an encouragement award for my essay. I felt very proud of myself knowing that I have experienced Slovenia on my visit there and that I am part of this culture.

I also received first prize in the Lego competition for my red Slovenian carnation. I felt that it represented Slovenia traditionally, yet it was a modern piece.

