



World Lebanese Cultural Union
Geographical Region Council for Australia and New Zealand
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Dear friends,

Prior to commencing and on behalf of the World Lebanese Cultural union (WLCU), Geographical Region Council (GRC) for Australia and New Zealand, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful support we received from the City of Darebin and for the individual efforts of the Mayor of Darebin, Cr Diana Asmar, to make this dream a reality for without her assistance this project would not have been achieved. The WLCU will always remember and recognise her unconditional support.

The WLCU would also like to highlight their gratitude to the Hon. Bill Shorten MP, Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation; Assistant Treasurer for being extremely supportive of this project and honouring us with his presence in the unveiling of the statue in unison with the Mayor of Darebin, Cr Diana Asmar.

The World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU), was established in Mexico in 1959, is recognized as an International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) and is associated with the Department of Public Information (DPI) of the United Nations (UN). The WLCU is an independent civil institution that is non-governmental, non-political, non-racialist, non-religious and non-profit and duly recognised as the sole representative of the Lebanese expansion worldwide. The WLCU is a cultural and philanthropic institution not seeking any material benefit or gain. It is governed by its statutes and by-laws.

The initial idea for the statue was derived from Ramez Barakat, a Lebanese-Mexican residing in Mexico. The statue is a symbol of the Lebanese Diaspora, it is the first tribute of appreciation and friendship to Victoria and symbolises the dream of many.

The first statue of the Lebanese immigrant was erected in Mexico in 1979. This was followed by a second at President Charles Helou Avenue in Beirut 2003 as a gift to the Lebanese government, a third in British Columbia, Canada in 2009, the fourth in Brisbane in 2010 and the fifth in Ghana, Africa in 2011. The unveiling today at Ray Bramham Gardens here in Darebin, Victoria marks the sixth erection of the statue.

The statue which was shipped to this destination via air, measures 2.5 meters in height and weighs 600 kg. Its base which is made of black granite weighs 1700kg and has a depth of 4.5 metres.

Today, as you closely examine the statue, you will notice the gazing eyes that symbolise the determination and the desire for a better life; his hands symbolise that he is ready for hard work. The statue may stand and face us but it never turns its back to Lebanon. His clothes are symbolic of the traditional attire that is still worn by some Lebanese that reside in the mountainous regions; the clothing is part of Lebanon's history and heritage; it represents a simple Lebanese man who came to Australia 150 years ago.

The WLCU's aim is to see similar statues of the Immigrant spread globally wherever Lebanese have set up residence.

In concluding, on behalf of the WLCU, whilst thanking all the sponsors and individuals for their generosity through their donations, I would like to give a special thanks to and acknowledge the WLCU State Council of Victoria for their hard work and contribution that has enabled this dream to succeeded.

Tony Yacoub
President
WLCU – GRC
Australia & New Zealand