



Anna Holevas



Manoli Antonarakis

be a rite of passage for many young Greeks. Manoli Antonarakis, 20, went to Rhodes last year with a large contingent of family and friends and felt very much at home.

“Both my parents were born out here but their family is from Rhodes and when we went back I felt like I belonged there. I could live there tomorrow,” says Antonarakis.

He also attended Greek school, lives at home with his parents Sophie and John and two brothers, and commuted from Wishart each day when he studied town planning at Bond University on the Gold Coast. He still commutes to the Coast each day and hasn’t considered relocating there.

“I do recognise that in lots of ways we’re quite different to Aussie guys my age. My parents were really strict and we are like all the Greeks I know, very family-oriented, very cultural. I’ve got Aussie friends but my closest mates are Greek, we all stick together,” he says.

And like the rest of the Greek community in Brisbane Antonarakis is looking forward to Paniyiri, the largest cultural festival in Australia, now in its 36th year. As many as 60,000 people are expected to make their way to Musgrave Park over the two days of the festival on 19 and 20 May.

While the rest of Brisbane goes to Paniyiri to fill up on honey puffs and other Greek culinary delights, and to join in the fun of grape stomping and the Zorba world record attempt, Antonarakis will be donning his Hercules costume for the third year in a row

as the festival mascot and serving on a drinks stand. Last year he played the bouzouki as well. “I took it up a few years ago, I love it.

I’m not too bad! The festival is fantastic, nobody goes hungry at Paniyiri. I love that so many people want to share in our culture – we Greeks know how to throw a party,” he says.

There are around 30,000 Greeks in the south east corner of

Queensland and Chris Kazonis, who heads the Paniyiri committee, says the number of young people getting involved in the community is also on the rise with a number of younger people appointed to the Paniyiri committee (Anna Holevas among them) and large numbers of young people attending mass at St George’s on Saturday evenings. “They go to mass before they go out!” laughs Kazonis. “It’s great to see so many of them at mass, not just because they have to go with their parents.”

Kazonis says there has been resurgence in support of a number of different cultural associations. “Some of the dancing groups which were struggling a few years ago have really turned around with numbers on the rise again. But lots of [the younger ones] are putting their hands up and saying ‘okay, how can we help?’ and it makes us older ones really proud to see that support from the younger people knowing what capable hands our community is in.”

Paniyiri is on Saturday 19 May 12 noon to 10pm and Sunday 20 May from 10am to 6pm at Musgrave Park and The Greek Club, Edmondstone Street, South Brisbane. See www.paniyiri.com for details.



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