



## Message from the President

Greetings to all members and I hope that the New Year will bring you good fortune to you and your families. The committee is busy preparing for the Sinhala and Tamil New Year festival to be held at the RNA Auditorium on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 2008.

This is our 30<sup>th</sup> year in succession of celebrating the New Year and we feel proud to be part of this society which values the rich traditions of Sri Lanka and also are able to, at the same time, assimilate to the Australian way of life.

Our tentative program for 2008 includes a curry night in May/June, a member's get together in August and the Dinner Dance in October. We will inform you of the dates in our next newsletter.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our past treasurer, Mrs Dhavina Mendis who has done a wonderful job for the past 2 years and will remain in the committee to give us valuable support and encouragement.

We hope to meet you all at our New Year Function and wishing you all the very best once again for the New Year

**Hiran Cooray**  
PRESIDENT



Our Founder President Mr Pat Abey and his wife Maria at last year's New Year function- April 2007.



## Management Committee

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**Mr Mervyn Thangarajah**  
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## **First Immigrants from Sri Lanka**

In the late 19th century, the first Sri Lankan immigrants to Australia were recruited to work on the cane plantations of northern Queensland. There are reports of Sri Lankans working in the gold-mining fields in New South Wales and as pearlers in Broome, Western Australia. By 1901, there were 609 Sri Lankan born persons in Australia.

The following advertisement appeared in the Ceylon Observer both in English and Sinhalese to engage people from Sri Lanka to work in plantations in North Queensland.

### **NOTICE: SINHALESE EMIGRANTS TO QUEENSLAND**

Term of service: For a period of 2 ½ or 5 years

Destination: The Eastern Coast of Queensland

Agricultural Employment: Sugar, Coffee, Cinchona, Cocoa etc., etc.

Wages: £20 Sterling per annum, and house and garden 242 square yards per adult free; no food, no clothing. These, latter can be supplied by employer on a corresponding reduction of salary.

Advances. An advance will be given to each adult in Ceylon, electing to go, and will be recoverable during the first two (2) years of his term, in equal payments.

Payments. Will become due quarterly.

Passage and Food. On a five (5) years engagement passage will be paid to and fro. On a two-and-a-half (2 ½ ) do. passage will be paid to and half from. Employee on renewal of engagement for 5 years after completion of first five (5) years, receive £25 per annum, wages.

Bonus of £6 sterling. On completion of five (5) years' term and employee electing to renew for a further period of five (5) years, he will be entitled for the above bonus of £6 and passage on completion of renewed term.

Bonus of £3 Sterling. On completion of two-and-a-half (2 ½ ) years term any employee electing to renew for a further period of two-and-a-half (2 ½ ) years he will be entitled for the above £3 but has then no claim for passage money on expiry of renewed term.

Accommodation. Same as accustomed to on the Ceylon Coffee Estates.

Inducements. 242 square yards for each adult man or woman for garden cultivation, the same not transferable without employer's sanction.

Medical Attendance. Free.

Holidays and Sundays. Sundays, Government holidays and Sinhalese holidays will be allowed.

Illness of employee. During a prolonged or severe illness the employee will be entitled to half salary and food gratis, on doctor's certificate.'

Absence without Leave. To be deducted for per day at £20 per annum on working days.

Size of Gangs. No labourer will be bound to work on any property where there are less than 10 of his own people employed.

Services Transferable. Services are transferable from employer to another for agricultural purposes on a two months' notice from an employer, the new employer undertaking to fulfil all existing agreements made with the old employer.

Wages to Commence. From date of landing at any port of Queensland.

Month of Grace. One (1) month allowed to employer to make arrangements to transport back to Ceylon all time expired labourers.

Many Sri Lankans may have opted to work in plantations and migrated to Queensland. However, the influx of foreign labour was not welcome by majority of the white local workers. A petition was submitted to the Governor by the Mackay constituents on 25th November 1882 demanding that the import of colored races to work in Queensland be immediately stopped. Subsequently a meeting was held with Mackay constituents on Tuesday 28th November. The editor of Mercury in his editorial of Wednesday the 6th December wrote:-

*"Mr Black in his address handled the coolie question with considerable adroitness. He avoided the headlong determination of those who would prohibit the importation of Coolies altogether, and the eagerness of those who fancy their earthly means will vanish unless a horde of dusky toilers are tempted across the "black water". It may after all prove that both classes are labouring in vain. It may after all prove that both classes are labouring in vain. The Cingalese who recently arrived do not appear charmed with the vastness of the prospects set before them.... They do not consider that twenty pounds a year and find themselves affords much margin for profit. The*

*extravagance of some of these Asiatics is positively appalling. The question to be really solved is whether or not the importation of the Coolies will injure the white inhabitants. The cry for the white men does not seem unreasonable when read by the light of recent events. The Coolie it would seem, is not a simple child of nature. He has received an education. The few that have come in contact with tradesmen of Mackay has rather astonished those worthies... There is a great fluency in the use of English language and a competent knowledge of mental arithmetic. They are dangerous. They will not and cannot be circumscribed in the nature of their employment. The class of Cingalese who have honoured us with their presence have souls above Chinese labour. In fact they appear to be intelligent, well trained artisans whom it is as reasonable to restrict to the shovel and the hoe as it would be to yoke a high bred and spirited horse to a bullock dray. We cannot have that class of men".*

The editor of the *Mercury* then cited the fact that the Government of Ceylon had already informed the Government of Queensland that it had every intention of introducing legislation that would regulate emigration under agreement. He foresaw that the Cingalese would receive such protection at the hands of their protectors as would prove embarrassing to those Queenslanders who desired the cheapest form of labour. The editor's confidence in his assessment of the future migration from Ceylon was further expressed in a leading article in the *Mercury* on Sunday, 16 December.

*"There is every indication that the Coolie business is working its own cure. The Cingalese are not pleasant or desirable additions to our population. They know too much and work too little. The prompt manner in which they struck work for white wages on their arrival considerably startled the gentlemen who relied on them for support under their tribulations... The question is solved. The real cause of dread has disappeared. Queensland could do in the future as she has done in the past and steadily advance without coolies". (Courtesy: Stanley J Sparkes)*

Additional note:

- 1) In the 1880s came Sinhalese labourers from Sri Lanka, most of who were Theravadin Buddhists. Brought here to work in the sugar industry, they constructed Australia's first Buddhist temple (since demolished) on Thursday Island, and planted bodhi trees there. Like the Chinese, most of these Sinhalese Buddhists returned to their homeland by the end of the nineteenth century. Some remained, however, and descendants, recognisable by their Sinhalese names, can be found among the members of some present-day Buddhist societies in Queensland. (Prof. R. S Bucknell, University of Qld)

## **The National Anthem of Sri Lanka**

Do you know the origin of Namo Namo Matha? After Sri Lanka gained independence from the British colonialists in 1948, the people of Sri Lanka awakened to new patriotic feelings. As one of the first steps of a new nation-state, which had freed itself from colonial powers, finding a lyrical expression of its independent status was a priority for the rulers.

A competition was conducted to find a suitable anthem which would befit the Island nation. Namo Namo Matha, composed by Ananda Samarakoon, was selected as the national anthem on November 22, 1951.

It was rendered in public for the first time on Independence Day, February 4, 1952, by 500 students from Musaeus collage, Colombo, and was broadcast over the radio.

The national anthem describes the natural beauty and the bounty of Sri Lanka, its rich harvests and many other qualities.

## **ADVERTISEMENTS**

### ***Advertising in the Newsletter***

*You can advertise your products or services for a fee of \$25 for a business-card sized display in three consecutive issues of the Newsletter. Please note that the Society does not guarantee or accept responsibility for any product or service so advertised.*

### ***Society Webpage***

*A new webpage for the Society has been set up at the URL: <http://www.srilanakansqlld.org>. For any communication regarding the webpage please contact the Webpage Administrator, whose contact details are given on page 2. Please consult the webpage for the latest information about the Society.*

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### **How'd you like to be a 'Rock Star'?**

*I am on the look-out to unearth all the hidden musical talent amongst our community and club members to help me with a very special musical project.*

*IF:*

- *You play an instrument but have never played in a band before,*
- *You've sometimes 'dreamed' about the possibility of playing in one*
- *You used to play in a band sometime in your past, be it a few years or many years ago, and you like to, once again*
- *You always thought you were a pretty good singer but never really had the chance to test this theory*
- *You like to sing, have sung before, in your church, school, etc and would like to 'have a go' once again,*

*I am interested in having a chat with you.*

*Remember, you're never too young or too old to be a 'Rock Star'. So, no matter what your instrument or playing or singing level is, this could be an opportunity to have some fun, improve your playing/singing, gain some great experience playing with other musicians and most importantly provide a lot of enjoyment to others.*

**INTERESTED?** *If so please contact me on:*

*Mobile: 0408 414 973 (all hours) or*

*E-mail to [laurensz.manricks@team.telstra.com](mailto:laurensz.manricks@team.telstra.com)*

*Thanks and all the best*

*Laurensz Manricks*

**When is Sinhala & Tamil New Year in 2008?**

USA / Canada: April 13th.

Europe: April 13th.

Gulf Countries: April 13th.

India/Sri Lanka : April 13th.

Bangla Desh / Burma/ Singapore: April 14th.

Malayasia, Fiji, China, Australia, Fiji, Japan: April 14th.

<http://www.mypanchang.com>

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# Daily News

Sri Lanka's National Newspaper since 1918

Tuesday, 18 March 2008

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The remains of former Minister and one time Speaker Anura Bandaranaike being brought to Parliament accompanied by President Mahinda Rajapaksa, Speaker W. J. M. Lokubandara, Opposition Leader Ranil Wickremesinghe, former Speaker Joseph Michael Perera and Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama.



President Rajapaksa condoles with former President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Sunethra Bandaranaike.  
Pictures by Saman Sri Wedage and Sudath Silva

**OUR DRUM TROUP GETTING READY FOR THE BIGDAY**



Deliver to:

Sri Lanka Society of Queensland Inc  
P.O. Box 15099  
City East QLD, 4002

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**Circulation**

This Newsletter is sent to all members, libraries, fraternal societies etc. It is also sent to persons who actively support Society activities. **If you receive it and are not in any of the above categories please inform the Society, or return it to the sender.** If you have not received your copy please contact the Publications Secretary.

#### **Objects and Rules of the Society**

The **Objects** are:

- 2) To promote harmonious co-operation and friendship amongst immigrants from Sri Lanka and Australians irrespective of racial, religious, political and other differences;
- 3) to preserve, promote and project the culture of Sri Lanka;
- 4) to render assistance to students and immigrants from Sri Lanka;
- 5) to encourage and foster recreational, sporting and social activities;
- 6) to publish and circulate news of Sri Lanka and local events;
- 7) to render assistance to the people of Sri Lanka in times of need, at the discretion of the Management Committee.

The **Rules** of the Society are those of a non-profit society. If you need to see the Constitution of the Society please contact the Secretary.

#### **Contacting the Society**

See above for postal address, masthead for email and Webpage, page 2 for office bearers.

#### **Brief History**

**Established in 1975 and incorporated a few years later. First Society in Queensland dedicated to serving all Queenslanders of Sri Lankan origin irrespective of ethnic identity, religion or language spoken.**

#### **Membership of the Society**

Open to anyone subscribing to the objects of the Society (see above). Annual fees are \$15 for family, \$10 single (Pensioners and Students: \$10 family, \$7 single). Application Form is given below, please return with the relevant fee.

#### **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM**

**Name** (with preferred title): .....

**Postal Address:** .....

**Telephone:** ..... **Email:** .....

**Category** (please tick): ☐ Family (\$15), ☐ Single (\$10), ☐ Concession Family (\$10), ☐ and Concession Single (\$7)

**Name of Partner** (Family category only): .....

I wish to be involved in or to involve my children in Society cultural activities (dancing etc.) [Please tick]

I apply for membership of the Sri Lanka Society of Queensland Inc. I agree with the objects and the rules of the Society. I enclose the relevant fee.

**SIGNATURE:** ..... **DATE:** .....