



POLISH EMBASSY NEWSLETTER 1/2013

CANBERRA, June/July 2013



FROM THE AMBASSADOR

Dear Readers!

It is great honour and pleasure to start my mission as the new Ambassador of Poland to Australia. Having arrived in Canberra in the middle of April, I would like to warmly welcome all Readers of our newsletter that gives me a good opportunity to introduce myself to you.

At the very beginning of my mission I was very fortunate to participate in the official visit to Australia of the Foreign Minister of Poland, Mr Radosław Sikorski, which took place in the first days of May. Very intense program and meetings have proved that Poland and Australia are “natural partners in building the relationship between Europe and Asia in the tough but exciting decades to come”. An important component of the visit was the economic one. Minister Sikorski was accompanied by a group of senior Polish business representatives, mainly from mining and energy companies, who were looking for contacts with Australian counterparts. The visit was a new opening in Polish-Australian relations and gave us a good opportunity to bring our countries closer.

Despite huge geographic distance between Poland and Australia the overall bilateral relations between our nations are very good. We share values of democratic governments and open societies and are eager to engage in resolving the most urgent international problems. We represent dynamic and fast developing economies which, as only few in the world, have avoided recession during the global financial crisis and continue economic and investment expansion to the outside world. And last but not least, we are nations of many young and dynamic people ready to understand the world and learn from each other.

The main target of my mission as Ambassador will be focused on promotion of today’s Poland as an important member state of the European Union. Lack of thorough information about my country here in Australia noticeably limits its perception among people, their readiness to understand and even to travel. This is also crucial for business relations. Someone who is not provided with enough and proper information will never make a decision to explore business and investment opportunities far away from home.

Me and my colleagues will concentrate on intensifying bilateral economic and trade relations and encouraging more investment. Poland has a growing potential for Australia’s commercial interests. As statistics show, direct merchandise exports to Poland in 2012 were A\$ 193 million, while imports from Poland were worth A\$ 470 million. The turnover between our countries amounted to A\$ 663 million. Although constantly growing, it has a big potential for further development.

People-to-people links are at the very heart of our relationship and Polish community in Australia plays a very important and active role in this regard. I am happy with the fact that there are approximately 170,000 people living here who identify themselves as being of Polish origin. I firmly believe that many of them can contribute to strengthen Polish-Australian relations, and broadly promote Polish culture and history.

Dear Readers, I will be very pleased to be in contact with you during my mission and will appreciate your opinions and comments on anything regarding Polish-Australian relations. You are more than welcome to visit our websites (www.canberra.polemb.net, www.sydney.polemb.net) and meet us on Twitter: @PLinAustralia, @PLinSydney, @MilewskiP.

With my kind regards,

Paweł Milewski
Ambassador



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MINISTER RADOŚLAW SIKORSKI VISITS AUSTRALIA



“Poland and Australia are natural partners in building the relationship between Europe and Asia in the tough but exciting decades to come,” underscored Minister Radosław Sikorski during his visit to Australia. Joint democratic values and growing economic potential – in particular in the mining sector – serve as the basis for ever closer ties. The visit to Australia on 2 and 6 May was the first at the level of foreign minister since 2003.



transformation and democratic institution building.

Minister Sikorski also spoke about the Polish path from dictatorship to democracy in an interview with *The Australian*, the country’s biggest daily newspaper: “Today, Poland is an example that others seem to want to learn from. Our speciality is the technology of transition,” Minister Sikorski emphasized.

“Poland is an unqualified, unambiguous European success story. We Poles will use our fast-growing weight in Europe to make the European Union a lot more Australian: Liberal-minded. Economically open. Strong in its own region, and setting a powerful positive global example. Active and ambitious. But also realistic and pragmatic on cross-cutting issues like climate change, cultural tolerance and world trade,” said Minister Sikorski in his landmark speech “Poland and the European Union in the Asian Century” at the Australian Institute of International Affairs in Sydney.

Minister Radosław Sikorski held talks with Australian Foreign Minister Bob Carr, focusing on the democratic values shared by Poland and Australia and broader cooperation. “Poland and Australia are important countries in the community of democracies,” Minister Carr said. He also noted the potential for cooperation in assisting Myanmar by making use of the Polish experience of political

Economic issues played an important role in the visit to Australia. Representatives of Poland’s biggest companies, especially mines and mining sector firms, accompanied Minister Sikorski in Sydney, where the Minister took part in the opening of the Polish-Australian Business Forum and Mining Seminar on 6 May. Cooperation in the area of mining is a key aspect of Polish-Australian economic ties. Polish companies (including Kopex, Famur, Fasing, Conbelts) are already supplying state-of-the-art mining equipment for the Australian market. There is

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From the Minister’s speech at AIIA



also plenty of room for cooperation in the gas extraction sector, in particular when it comes to unconventional gas reserves.

During May 3rd Constitution Day ceremonies in Sydney, Minister Sikorski awarded distinctions to people responsible for enhancing Poland-Australia relations. The Honourable Michael Danby, Federal Member for Melbourne Ports and Parliamentary Secretary for the Arts, was presented with the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit for his

contribution to the development of good relations between Poland and Australia and the Polish-Jewish dialogue. Former diplomat Clare Birgin and former BBC correspondent in Poland Kevin Ruane received the Bene Merito awards in recognition of their strong support for the Solidarity movement in the 1980s.

[Minister Sikorski's speech at AIIA](#)



Minister Sikorski at the Polish – Australian Business Forum & Mining Seminar



During the visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland Mr. Radosław Sikorski in Australia the Polish – Australian Business Forum & Mining Seminar was held in Sydney on May 6, 2013. The Business Forum, addressed by Minister Sikorski and Hon. Christopher Hartcher, MP, Minister for Resources and Energy NSW was dedicated to the Australian business community with special focus on trade & investment opportunities in Poland, whilst the Seminar aimed at mining and LNG/CBM/shale gas business perspectives between both countries. The PABF&MS was attended by several hundred business professionals, representatives of EABC, University of Wollongong and UNSW, Austrade Sydney, Trade & Investment NSW Government, Australian Coal Association, Australian Petroleum Production & Exploration Association and many others.

In Austrade Sydney office the Polish mining companies had a presentation on Australia and Austrade activities in promoting business opportunities for both Australian and foreign entities.

During the following days the Polish mining delegation had a site visit to the underground coal mines Ravensworth and Ashton Mine as well as to Port Waratah Coal Services in Kooragang and attended a meeting with the Australian private and public sector leaders in Newcastle hosted by Austrade and Trade & Investment NSW. On the last day of their official visit to Australia the Polish mining delegation was received by CSIRO Earth Science & Resource Engineering in Brisbane.

All the events attended by CEOs from 11 biggest Polish mining companies and institutes and the representatives of the Australian mining community were without reservation beneficial to both parties and contributed to a better understanding of the mining sector, investment possibilities and general perspectives of mining development both in Poland and Australia. This will ultimately allow for bringing good business opportunities in the nearest future.



The National Day Celebration



The reception organized to mark that occasion was attended by 150 guests, among them representatives of the Federal Parliament, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and other federal agencies. Among those present were many ambassadors and businessmen, people from the fields of science and culture, and representatives of the army and media as well as the Polish community. When His Excellency Mr Paweł Milewski addressed the guests, he recalled the role that the May 3 Constitution played in history as the the world's second oldest codified national bill of rights after the U.S. Constitution.

Mr Milewski presented the priorities for his tenure as Ambassador to Australia and Papua New Guinea. He also mentioned common interests and values that bind Poland and Australia and pointed out to a new chapter in the bilateral relations, opened during the visit by Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski and his consultations with his Australian counterpart Mr Bob Carr in Sydney. The celebration took place between two parts of the first official visit by a Polish Foreign Minister in Australia in a decade.



Credentials presentation



Two weeks after his arrival in Canberra, the new Ambassador of Poland H.E. Paweł Milewski presented his letters of credence to H.E. Quentin Bryce, Governor General of the Commonwealth of Australia. The ceremony took place on 30 April at the Government House in Canberra. The Ambassador was accompanied by Mr Marek Kijewski, Counsellor at the Embassy. In a short conversation, the Governor General and the Ambassador highlighted the excellent bilateral relation between the two countries and stressed the pivotal role of the Polish community in Australia.



For more Embassy news + information:

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Quo Vadis Australia 2013

Quo Vadis is an annual congregation of college and graduate students as well as young professionals aimed at creating a sustainable world-wide network of young members of the Polish Diaspora. The Quo Vadis conference series originated in Canada in 2009. In the last four years, there have been four editions of Quo Vadis in Canada (Ottawa 2009, Windsor 2010, Toronto 2011 and Calgary 2012) and one in the United States (Chicago 2012), which have attracted delegates from all corners of the North American continent, as well as Europe and Australia.



Quo Vadis Australia team

(Photo: Chris Bajkowski)



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The main aim of this project is to unify and strengthen local communities as well as create networking opportunities through discussions, lectures, and panels on leadership, heritage and the future of the Polish Diaspora. Revolving around three aims: heritage, leadership and unity, the movement was founded on the concept of providing its participants with a unique opportunity to network, meet new people, exchange ideas, brainstorm innovative concepts and learn leadership skills from distinguished speakers and through participation in workshops. The Quo Vadis network alone is already 500 alumni strong.

In 2013 there will be three conferences: in Montreal, Connecticut and Sydney. The Quo Vadis Conference in Sydney will take place at the Rydges World Square from 4th till 6th October 2013. Registration will open shortly. Youth and young professionals between the ages of 18 and 35 are invited to join this exciting movement by participating in the conference. Quo Vadis aims to reconnect Polish youth in Australia who have no ties to the organised Polish community through providing a common goal: a means for them to meet and rediscover the Polish community through new and innovative avenues.

The official media launch of Quo Vadis Australia 2013 took place at the Consulate on 17th May.



From left to right: Leszek Wikarjusz – President of Polish community Council of Australia, Maciej Fibrich, Daniel Gromann – Polish Consul General and Szymon Erdzik
(Photo: Chris Bajkowski)

CULTURAL EVENTS AT THE CONSULATE

Art of Conversation presented by Polski Teatr “Stary” from Adelaide

Polski Teatr “Stary” (*Polish “Old” Theatre*) from Adelaide presented one of their plays at the Consulate in April: *Art of Conversation* by Kazimierz Brandys. The play features a couple who in their youth fought for the Polish independence during World War II and had a romantic involvement at that time. They meet in Paris in the 1980s after 30 years of separation. The long dialogue between the former veterans and lovers, full of memories, sentiments and surprises, weaves a complicated picture of vicissitudes and twists of fate so intimately interlaced with the Polish history and so tragically typical of their generation.



(Photo: Tom Koprowski)



(Photo: Tom Koprowski)

Jolanta Ratuszyńska and Marek Kobyłecki, who performed in *Art of Conversation*, received a thunderous applause from the audience in the fully packed reception hall of the Consulate.

Polski Teatr “Stary” (*Polish “Old” Theatre*) is the oldest Polish amateur theatre group in the world. It was established in 1955 and has continued its performance ever since. Based in Adelaide, it occasionally presents its shows in other major cities of Australia.

Art of Conversation premiered in Warsaw in December 1988 and in Adelaide in May 2012.

Evening of Polish poetry

An evening of poetry brought together a group of Polish poets from Sydney and Canberra at the Consulate at the end of May. Ela Chylewska (left), Maryla Rose (right), Ludwika Amber (right below) and Aleksander Pęczalski (below) read their poems; some pieces were also recited by actress Marta Kieć-Gubała (left below). The evening, called *The Autumn Smiles of Poetry*, included a diversified, colourful selection of works by these distinguished Polish-Australian artists.

(All photos: Tom Koprowski)



New leadership of the Polish Community Council of Australia

The 45th Congress of Delegates of the Polish Community Council of Australia took place in Brisbane on 8th and 9th June 2013. After several hours of animated discussion, a new President of the Council was elected: Mr Leszek Wikarjusz from Brisbane, who had served as Vice President of the Council for the last two years. He won the challenge with 39 votes to 36 against Mr Marian Pawlik, current Vice President of the Polish Community Council of Victoria. The election demonstrated the vigour of the democratic procedures in this highest representation of the Polish community in Australia, which has always been committed to the cause of freedom, independence and democracy.



Deliberations in the Polish House in Milton



Leszek Wikarjusz

During more than sixty years of its existence, the Polish Community Council of Australia has played an active role voicing opinions of the Polish community in Australia, lobbying and providing assistance to Poles in need. It was vital in organising political and economic support to back the Polish people in their struggle for democracy. It also organised support for refugees who encountered difficulties settling in Australia.

Leszek Wikarjusz, the new president of the Council, has pledged to raise the organisation's public profile and to strengthen the cooperation between the member organisations. He will be assisted in this task by an enthusiastic team of members of the Executive representing various states and territories of Australia.

The Polish community in Australia is well-organised. There are numerous organizations, clubs, Polish Houses, community schools of the Polish language and culture, veteran associations, seniors clubs, folkloric song and dance ensembles, theatre groups, aged care services, residential care facilities, etc. Major festivals are organised regularly in various cities and the Polish



The delegates in session



community takes an active part in the rich life of the multicultural Australia of today.

The number of people of Polish ancestry in Australia rose from 163 000 in 2006 to 170 000 in 2011.

Left: Consul General D. Gromann addresses the delegates

All photos on this page: Puls Polonii

	VIC	NSW	QLD	WA	SA	ACT	TAS	NT	Total
Polish ancestry	53 191	48 155	24 183	18 642	17 972	4 034	3 388	772	170 347
Poland-born	16 381	14 328	5 563	5 547	5 053	1 022	659	100	48 677
Polish speakers	16 476	14 857	6 240	6 022	5 107	1 143	761	95	50 692