

Never forget--to ask questions, audience told at book launch

"Never forget to ask questions, even though you won't always want to hear the answers," were the wise words Andreas Leonakas, whose be-flagged walking odysseys between Brisbane and the border are becoming a local institution. The Greek-Australian who raises funds for returned soldiers was one of the guest speakers on a beautiful Saturday afternoon, at the Churches of Christ auditorium filled with locals wanting to hear the story of the links between the Southern Downs and the Battle of Crete in World War II.

Deborah Wheeler held the Warwick launch of her book *Silk Clouds & Olive Trees: stories from the Battle of Crete* to an attentive gathering. Her book, which is the culmination of research about 10 Australians who fought in the Battle of Crete, was inspired by Andreas, the son of a survivor who walks from Brisbane to Wallangarra annually in commemoration. Mr Leonakas spoke about his father and about the war to the audience, which included Mayor Vic Pennisi, Cr Cheryl Windle, Belinda Lister, Dr Blair Koppen, Gerard Walsh, Rod Kelly, Squadron Leader Ben Barber, and other members of the Southern Downs community—including its prominent Greek community members, notably Jim Sarnios.

Susan Chuck, the mother of the late Private Benjamin Chuck who died in the Australia-Afghanistan conflict, spoke stirringly about her son and about the 42 for 42 organisation, which was



founded to care for returning veterans. Forty one soldiers died in the drawn-out Afghanistan campaign, with the '42' representing the now hundreds lost to suicide in the intervening years.

The Hall was decorated with memorabilia from Ms Wheeler's research including photographs and documents. A large poster of the 42 Australians who have died in Afghanistan put a sombre note to the afternoon. Afternoon tea replete with ANZAC biscuits saw the day end with chatting, hugs and tears between a number of attendees.