

Language assistance offered to voters

The NSW Electoral Commission (NSWEC) will offer voting assistance in 24 community languages to meet the specific needs of people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.

The assistance will be in the form of interpreter services, the publication of elector information in specific languages and an advertising campaign in key community media.

Voting assistance guides are available in community languages through the commission's website (elections.nsw.gov.au) and will be in printed form at all polling places

across the State.

The guide has been translated into Arabic, Assyrian, Chinese, Croatian, Greek, Hindi, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Macedonian, Maltese, Persian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish and Vietnamese. "Voters can also call the 13 14 50 telephone interpreter service to arrange for an interpreter in any language to join in a three-way conversation with an election official to answer any questions they may have," said NSW Electoral Commissioner Colin Barry.

"We are also in the process of recruiting staff who speak a community language to work at polling places on Election Day."

A multilingual poster will be displayed in more than 2,200 polling places indicating the community languages spoken by election officials.

The NSWEC will also produce several newsletters in the lead-up to the 2008 to be distributed through the Community Relations Commission's networks. The newsletters are available on the commission's website.

"We will also run an extensive elector information campaign in 12 lan-

guages to increase general awareness and understanding of the election leading up to voting day on Saturday 13, September.

"This will involve advertising in 15 community newspapers and on SBS radio and community radio networks."

For enquiries in languages other than English call our interpreting service on 13 14 50. Visit the Media Centre at www.elections.nsw.gov.au for an election snapshot, media releases, election handbook, council index, key dates, boundary maps and voting information.

Greek singer Despina Vandi injured in car crash

Athens. The Greek singer Despina Vandi was injured in a car crash, the Greek radiostation SKAI announced. According to the information the incident happened on Monday morning at 8.50 local time in Atica when Vandi's car collided with a tank truck. Vandi was transported to a state-run hospital in Athens, where she received emergency treatment. Later she requested to be transferred to a private clinic.

Ethnic Greek among victims in South Ossetia clashes

A 78-year-old ethnic Greek has been killed during clashes between Russian and Georgian forces in the city of Tskhinvali in the breakaway province of South Ossetia.

The Foreign Ministry said that Ivan Michailidis was killed during the second day of fighting in the city. His three remaining family members are still in the Tskhinvali area.

The ministry said that 25 refugees of Greek origin or who are married to ethnic Greeks have sought shelter in the Russian city of Vladikavkaz.

Dear Nia Vardalos, about those columns

By Jayne I. Hanlin

For a long time, I have been fascinated with ancient Greece – its history, its playwrights and poets, its mythology, its architecture.

So in the 2002 movie, "My Big Fat Greek Wedding," when Toula Portokalos (played by Nia Vardalos) describes her family's house as being like the Parthenon, complete with Corinthian columns, I was taken aback. Yes, the house did have Corinthian columns on the first level and Ionic ones on the upper story, but the Parthenon has neither. Its columns are Doric.

Maybe nobody else who has seen this romantic comedy noticed the mistake, but it distracted me from fully enjoying the delightful film. As a retired teacher, I have strong feelings about the importance of presenting accurate facts.

And I'm not the only one. For example, when publications give wrong information, they quickly print a correction.

But is there anything to do about mistakes in movies?

Well, I felt I had to write to Ms. Vardalos, who wrote the script for the movie, in a matter-of-fact way and mention the columns. Perhaps



A moviegoer hopes that in Nia Vardalos's latest film, she will correct a mistake about the Parthenon's columns.

not surprisingly, I never received a reply. Maybe she thought I was being petty or that my concern about historical accuracy wasn't all that important in her film.

But last fall in Athens, I was atop the Acropolis at the same time as she was. An American film studio was shooting a new movie there., ("My Life in Ruins" will open Aug. 28.).

Vardalos wore large gold hoop earrings; a turquoise, knee-length dress; and open-toed, high-wedge shoes. Slung over her shoulder was a huge brown purse with a long strap. From my vantage point, her makeup looked perfect. She was slim, and her curly hair reached below her shoulders.

After the cameramen had filmed several takes, the movie star smiled and hugged cast members.

Not far away, three huge cranes were poised to begin work transferring the massive, priceless contents of the Acropolis Museum to a new museum down in the city the follow-

ing day. Elsewhere, this scheduled move had made the world news, but the filming atop Athena's hill diverted the tourists' attention.

The filmmakers used huge reflectors to shoot the scene, and some of the local crew had a special assignment: Keep the tourists moving around the roped-off area near the set so that they would not get in the way – or take photos of Nia.

I was somewhat compliant, kept out of the crew's way, and did not interfere with their shooting, but I disagreed about their right to restrict my movements. After all, it was normal public hours to visit the temple, and I had paid full-price admission to climb up the hill. So I didn't resist the urge to use my digital camera with its

wonderful zoom lens.

Afterward, I was tempted to walk casually past the movie crew's guards and in a polite and friendly manner, introduce myself to Vardalos as her "column" correspondent.

Then, I thought, to prove my point in situ, I would point to the Parthenon's columns.

But I didn't do it.

I decided that in her new film, Vardalos has a unique opportunity to correct the misinformation for moviegoers (including me). In it, she plays the part of a tour guide, a profession that in the real world takes pride in sharing accurate information.

In that role, I hope she will correctly identify the columns in Pericles's 5th-century masterpiece.

Either way, I plan to write her another letter.

CAPTION: Doric columns: The Parthenon, a temple to the Greek goddess Athena, was built in the 5th century BC.

Museums throughout Greece see a dip in visitors

A disappointing statistic was released about museum visits this past weekend. The number of people visiting museums in Greece dropped by 44 percent in the first quarter of this year, reaching 327,000 as compared to 579,000 visitors during the same period last year, the National Statistics Service revealed yesterday.

The Museum at Ancient Olympia, whose site was ravaged by fire last summer, saw the largest drop, receiving 79 percent fewer visitors than last year.

Tourism has actually grown in the last year, so this drop seems strange to us.