

# Theophanous accusation shakes up cabinet

LABOR'S dominant Right faction is plotting who should replace Theo Theophanous in state cabinet as Premier John Brumby battles to contain the fallout from a rape allegation against the veteran minister.

Labor insiders say Mr Theophanous is "politically dead meat", as police investigate a formal complaint from a former friend of the minister that he raped her in Parliament House in September 1998.

Mr Brumby yesterday conspicuously left open the possibility Mr Theophanous could be replaced in cabinet if charged, without waiting for a conviction or acquittal.

The leading contenders to replace Mr Theophanous in cabinet are former union leader Martin Pakula and Victoria's richest MP, former internet entrepreneur Evan Thornley.

Labor sources said cabinet secretary Tony Lupton and parliamentary secretary Fiona Richardson could also be in line for promotion if Mr Brumby opted for a bigger reshuffle in preparation for the 2010 election.

Mr Theophanous, 60, who vehemently denies any wrongdoing, went to ground yesterday after standing down as minister for industry, trade and major projects on Monday, when police confirmed he was

under investigation. Friends said he was shell-shocked, concerned about the impact of the controversy on his wife, Rita, but confident the allegation would be found to be "100% rubbish".

Mr Brumby yesterday refused to guarantee Mr Theophanous' political future.

"If at the end of that (police investigation) there is no case to answer, yes, of course, he would return to cabinet," Mr Brumby said. "Should other events unfold, obviously that's a different circumstance."

He was briefly lost for words when told on 3AW that the accusation was rape.

"Well, I'm not in a position to comment

on that, and I can certainly say to you that he (Mr Theophanous) did not mention that in any way, shape or form in his discussion with me," Mr Brumby said.

He said he did not know the details of the allegations against Mr Theophanous, saying police would not reveal the nature of the complaint to the minister.

Asked if he believed Mr Theophanous' statement that he had "no case to answer", Mr Brumby said: "I don't have information to the contrary. I have his assertion to me that he has done nothing wrong, and he is entitled, obviously, like any other person, to the presumption of innocence."



## Greek Parliament delegation in Sydney

A four-member Greek Parliament delegation will attend the World Council of Hellenes Abroad (SAE) Oceania Region General Assembly meeting to be held in Sydney at the end of the month. The MPs to attend are Varvara Nikolaidou (KKE) 5th vice-president of the Greek Parliament, Theodoros Karaoglou (ND), Panagiotis Sgouridis (PASOK), and Adonis Georgiadis (LAOS). Greece's ambassador to Australia Giorgos Zois will also attend the convention.

## Greek nun hands hefty labour bill to ex-sisters

SALONIKA, GREECE (AFP) — A Greek nun ousted from a nunnery in the north of the country has demanded over 240,000 euros (326,000 dollars) in arrears for 23 years of hard labour, a justice source said. The unidentified 45-year-old nun filed a complaint with a court in Salonika demanding the sum, plus another 54,349 dollars she had allegedly donated to the convent, the justice source said. She claims to have worked as a full-time labourer at the nunnery, building, digging and carrying heavy loads in a job description which would have earned at least 30 euros daily in the outside world. The nun said she was ousted from the nunnery in Koufalia, some 40 kilometres (25 miles) northwest of Salonika, after publicly disagreeing with the mother superior.

# Greek paradise at risk as Athens plans to rip up planning rulebook

The Greek opposition leader George Papandreou said the easing of planning regulations on islands such as Santorini was 'a way to fill the government's coffers'

The Greek islands are facing a Spanish-style development disaster under plans that would demolish building regulations and encourage a construction boom on some of Europe's last undisturbed coastline.

Just as other European countries are counting the cost of overdevelopment in coastal areas, Greece's government is seeking to redraw planning regulations and open the islands up to high-density summer homes, from Skopelos to Santorini.

Opposition parties have been joined by conservation groups, architects, hoteliers and planning experts in condemning the changes which could come into practice by the end of next month. "We are about to see an explosion of summer house construction along the Spanish coast development model," said Kriton Arsenis, from the Hellenic Society for the Protection of the Environment.

Greece has more than 10,000 miles of coastline, and spectacular archipelagos in the Aegean and Ionian Seas with several thousand islands. The islands have – with few notable exceptions – been spared intensive development as they lack the infrastructure and natural resources to sustain large hotels and resorts.

Under the new proposals, restrictions on the size and density of summer homes would be removed and the state subsidies currently available only to hoteliers would be farmed out to housing developers.

George Papandreou, leader of the main opposition socialists, accused the government of launching an irreversible takeover that would change the country's landscape. "[They see this] as a way to fill the government coffers in a once-only massive international auction of Greece's relatively pristine shores and island constellations," he said.

Other European countries such as Spain have been left with an ugly concrete legacy of hotels and holiday homes built during the property bubble that are now largely worthless.

The unusual silence in Greece's media on the proposals has also raised concerns over the links between media and construction interests. For the past two decades, the



Greek economy has been fuelled by a mainland construction boom and many of the tycoons that profited from this now control large newspaper and television groups. Already unusually large property purchases have started to occur. An unnamed company bought 1,500 hectares of the Aegean island of Ios earlier this year. Under current laws a single house of about 200sq m could be built on the site – which is currently used for grazing – but under the new laws, tens of thousands of small houses would be allowed.

Midway through their second term, Greece's ruling New Democracy party now has a single-seat majority in parliament and could face a snap election before the end of the year. The country has been in a prolonged economic decline since the orgy of public spending that accompanied the 2004 Olympics in Athens, with inflation and unemployment climbing all the time. The Environment and Public Works minister Dimitris Souflias insists that the new planning framework is "green" and that it will give full legal protection to EU-identified sites.

The government has said it will approve the plans within a month despite its critics and has ignored opposition demands for a parliamentary discussion on the issue.

"The prospect of snap elections has caused this government to try to ram through the interests of real estate developers as fast as possible," said Mr Papandreou. "This means passing the laws without any discussion in Parliament, discussion which would be potentially embarrassing for the conservatives."

The only European country without a completed land register, Greece already suffers from a notoriously chaotic planning system. Until now though, its saving grace has been to limit that building outside of urban areas to a relatively small scale. The potential impact of an unchecked construction boom on the fragile ecosystem of the islands has led the national hoteliers' association and a number of local authorities to join the battle against the government.

Article from The Independent

## Doctors Leave Medical Spatula Inside Woman's Abdomen

A Greek gynecologist and two doctors-in-training had their licenses revoked for up to one year after they left a medical spatula inside of a patient's abdomen.

The incident occurred during a minor surgery at a hospital in Serres, which is in northern Greece, during January 2005. The patient, a 45-year-old woman, developed breathing problems, a skin rash and a fever. Fluid gathered in her abdomen. The doctors initially thought she was having an allergic reaction, but a CAT scan revealed the medical error.