

# Australian Hellenic Council (NSW) Inc

## A coordinating body for the Australian Hellenic community



A delegation of Greek Australian Community leaders met yesterday with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. The delegation consisted of:-

George Angelopoulos, Costa Vertzaias, Patricia Drivas, Dean Tsubakos, George Vellis, Harry Danalis, Bill Papastergiadis, Vasilis Elovaris, Emiliios Konidaris, Costas Procopiou, Theo Dimarchos, Nick Koukouvitakis.

The meeting with the Prime Minister was conducted in a cordial and friendly atmosphere and he confirmed

Australia's continuous support on the Macedonian and Cyprus issues.

The delegation also expressed its support for the Federal Government's proposed national curriculum for primary and secondary education. The Prime Minister supported the idea of the compulsory learning of a second language by all students with emphasis on Asian languages.

The Prime Minister also informed the delegation that the Government was committed to multicultural-

ism and that a new multicultural policy was in the process of preparation and would be announced in the New Year.

Finally, the delegation informed the Prime Minister of an unexpected consequence of the signing of the Social Security Agreement viz. complications for those pensioners already receiving a pension from Greece, and the need for a possible amnesty. The Prime Minister asked his advisor to refer the matter to Minister Jenny Macklin to convene a consultative meeting.



### Greek TV reporter dies after Afghan road accident

*ATHENS, Greece: A Greek journalists' union says a war correspondent with state-run television has died from injuries sustained in a road accident in Afghanistan last month.*

*Giorgos Koiliaris had worked for several newspapers and radio stations before he started working for the NET broadcaster. The 53-year-old specialized in reporting on wars from around the globe, beginning in Lebanon in the 1980s.*

*The journalists' union said Sunday that Koiliaris died in an Athens hospital late Saturday. He was seriously injured in the road accident on Oct.8 and was evacuated to Abu Dhabi and then Greece.*

# Essay-writing pupils slam racism

**A large segment of Greek society is mistrustful and condescending toward immigrants but also hypocritical as they make use of their services, according to schoolchildren who participated in an essay-writing competition organized by the Athens office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).**

**“W**ith my essay I wanted to respond to fellow pupils whose behavior toward foreign children is racist,” 16-year-old Maria-Anastassia Louka from Lamia told Kathimerini. According to Louka, who won the prize for the best essay, Greek schoolboys harass female immigrants in the classroom and in the schoolyard “because they see them as easy targets and do not respect them.”

Older Greeks are also mistrustful of foreigners, Louka says. “Immigrants want to create relationships with us but Greeks keep their distance,” Louka said, adding that there is widespread hypocrisy. “Everyone secretly buys from the Chinese because their goods are cheap,” she said.

Other pupils used their essays to



### Power of words

*A recent story in Kathimerini highlighted essays by young Greek students describing the prejudices in Greece against foreigners.*

*- Perhaps the most poignant observation was by 12-year-old Yiannis Petkanis. “I saw migratory birds flying south for the winter and thought that refugees are like this but unfortunately they don't have the same freedom to return to their native country however homesick they may feel.” -*

stress the value of the different outlook and experience of immigrants. “We have a lot to learn from immigrants,” said Iliana Kyriazidou from Kavala. “When they tell us stories about their homeland we all sit and listen, even those who bully them.”

Eleftheria Tsaknaki drew the inspiration for her piece from the story of

her schoolfriend Adina who set off for Greece from Kurdistan but whose father died during the exhausting trip. “I want to appeal to the government to listen to political refugees and not abandon them to an uncertain fate,” Tsaknaki said.

Perhaps the most poignant observation was by 12-year-old Yiannis Petkanis. “I saw migratory birds flying south for the winter and thought that refugees are like this but unfortunately they don't have the same freedom to return to their native country however homesick they may feel.”

The UNHCR is pleased with the response to its competition. “We are pleasantly surprised as we see that the children are increasingly informed every year,” UNHCR's information officer Stella Nanou told Kathimerini, adding that many of the entrants expressed an interest in working as volunteers at refugee support centers.

## Visiting the Greek community of Benghazi

Recently the Patriarch of Alexandria paid a visit to the Greek communities that reside in Benghazi and Tripoli in Libya. (Yes Libya.) Greece has had a long and positive relationship with Libya, actually dating back as early as 700 BC when settlers from Crete settled on the northern coast of the country, and Greeks have had a presence mostly in Benghazi and Tripoli for generations.

The visit made us want to learn some more about the Greek diaspora in the country and here are some facts that we wanted to share.

- Benghazi (where the majority of the Greek community resides) is only 400 km south of Crete, and to this date has many residents who have Cretan surnames.

- The ancient city of Cyrene was the largest Greek settlement in the area that is modern day Libya and today is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

- The Greek community is centered in the country's two largest cities: around 500 reside in Tripoli and nearly 1,000 live in Benghazi

- The Greek community in Benghazi operates its own schools and also has its own small Greek Orthodox church with one priest.

-The Greek community in Tripoli also has one church of its own.

- There are several Greek companies that do business in Libya including Hellenic Petroleum.