

It's their big, fat Greek Xmas party

ACTOR Nick Giannopoulos and one-time tennis star Mark Philippoussis are throwing a Christmas party that promises to be one of the year's biggest.

The event, which will have a huge guest list of sports and entertainment people, will be held at Eve nightclub on December 20.

The pair will fly their mate Alex Dimiatriades from Sydney to DJ on the night.

They've been friends for years and have always talked about throwing an event, something that could become regular.

"I've known Mark since he was a teenager," Giannopoulos said. "I guess being two Greeks well

known in Melbourne, it was inevitable we would meet one day, so we did.

"We have always kept in touch and threatened to do something like this, but we've never followed through with it.

"This time the timing seemed right."

Giannopoulos was getting the invitations ready this week and said the party was a perfect way to end what has been a tough year for many.

"It's been a really tough year and a lot of people are not doing Christmas parties this year," he said.

"Mark and I were saying it's been such a tough year for so many people, so why don't we get all our

friends together and enjoy ourselves and remind ourselves how good life can be and celebrate what life offers.

"Mark was right into it and said 'absolutely'."

Philippoussis's girlfriend, Siobhan Parekh, will be by her boyfriend's side - the Scud recently denied there was any rift between them after he attended a Brighton dance party last month alone.

He said he was looking forward to celebrating being based back in Melbourne.

"I'm happy to be back home in Melbourne and I'm looking forward to catching up with lots of friends at our Christmas party," he said.

Prosecutor asks Greek court to annul gay marriages

A Greek court is considering a prosecutor's request to overturn the country's first gay weddings, celebrated this year despite official warnings they were illegal, a lawyer said on Thursday.

Two couples, one gay and one lesbian, married by a mayor on the Aegean island of Tilos in June, say they took advantage of a failure in Greece's civil law to specify gender in matrimony.

However, a public prosecutor from the neighbouring island of Rhodes took the case to court, saying neither the law nor Greece's constitution referred to same-sex marriage. He has asked the court to rule on the validity of gay marriage.

"We believe the court cannot remain uninfluenced after top officials statements that the weddings were invalid," said the defendants' lawyer, Vassilis Hirdaris.

The Orthodox church, which officially represents more than 90 percent of Greece's 11 million people, condemned the weddings. The Justice Ministry also said they were illegal and that all involved would face charges.

Hirdaris said the gay couples would take the case to the European Court of Human Rights if their weddings were found to be invalid. The Greek court is expected to rule by March 2009.

Although many European Union countries passed legislation allowing gay marriage or giving partnership rights to same-sex couples, Greece has not done so.

Greek youths riot after police shoot boy

Riots have broken out in several Greek cities after police shot dead a teenage boy in Athens. Following the shooting in the central Exarchia district of the capital late yesterday, youths began throwing petrol bombs at police, burning cars and smashing windows.



Officers used teargas to try to disperse the crowds as hundreds of protesters marched on the police headquarters in Athens chanting "Murderers in uniforms".

The violence spread quickly to Greece's second largest city of Thessaloniki and to other towns in the north.

The circumstances surrounding the boy's death remain unclear. According to a statement issued by police and obtained by Reuters, the officers said

their patrol car had been attacked by 30 youths throwing stones and other objects.

When they attempted to arrest the youths, they were attacked again and one of the officers fired three shots, killing the boy, the statement said.

"The two maintain that they were attacked again and responded, with one firing a stun grenade and the other, by shooting three times, resulting in the fatal wounding of the minor."

It was the first time since 1985 that police have killed a minor in Greece, a police spokesman said. The officers have been suspended pending the outcome of the investigation.

Greek riot police officers in Athens. Photograph: Orestis Panagioutou/EPA Greece's interior minister, Prokopis Pavlopoulos, called for restraint during demonstrations - the country's worst civil disturbance in years. He submitted his res-

ignation in the early hours of Sunday, but it was not accepted by the prime minister.

Pavlopoulos promised there would be a thorough investigation into the teenager's death and pledged "exemplary punishment" for anyone found responsible.

"It is inconceivable for there not to be punishment when a person loses their life, particularly when it is a child," he said. "The taking of life is something that is not excusable in a democracy."

Pavlopoulos said the police were obliged to ensure civil order, but stressed they would do so in a defensive role.

"It is everyone's right to demonstrate and to advocate for their rights," he said. "But I stress, not by destroying the property of others, not turning against people who are not to blame for anything."

The fire department said an initial assessment showed more than 20 stores, several bank branches and many cars were burned in Athens.

Search for abducted doctor proves fruitless

The police search for the 50-year-old cardiologist, who was abducted from his house in Vari on Thursday, has proved fruitless. The family's two cars were found burnt in Varkiza and Ekali. This is the only evidence the abductors have left.

The abductors had broke into the doctor's house on Thursday evening and immobilized his wife and two children, removing all money and jewelery. When the doctor returned home he was hit by the culprits and was transferred to one of the family's cars and abducted.

The police have launched a search in many areas including Varkiza, where one of the burnt cars was found. The police believe the abductors come from eastern Europe.