

The Golden Greek would be so proud

WHEN he was an entrepreneurial young Adelaide solicitor in the 1980s, Nick Xenophon was fascinated by World Championship Wrestling.

He spent months tracking down retired greats such as Mario Milano and Killer Karl Kox, interviewing them for a documentary script. The film did not get off the ground but Xenophon, now an independent senator for South Australia, has retained some of the show business tricks of his old idols.

While he has extracted \$900 million for the Murray River, the half-nelson inflicted on the Federal Government over its economic stimulus package was largely illusory.

Three concessions bought Xenophon's vote. First, the Government agreed that \$500 million it was already planning to spend over four years buying water entitlements from irrigators would be brought forward by a year.

The Government had already offered to bring forward \$400 million. Xenophon secured another \$100 million.

Secondly, the Government agreed to allocate \$200 million from its \$12.9 billion Water for the Future plan to initiatives in Murray-Darling municipalities.

Yet it is almost certain at least that amount would

have gone to those communities anyway.

Finally, the Government ear-marked \$200 million of its \$1 billion urban water and desalination plan for stormwater harvesting. That is probably a little more than the Government would have otherwise allocated to stormwater projects.

All this is not nothing. But nor is it the swingeing forearm jolt suggested by the headline \$900 million figure.

Spiros Arion, the Golden Greek, would have been proud.

Article from Sydney Morning Herald

11,500 Greeks fall first victims to unemployment

Athens. 11,500 Greeks fell the first victims of unemployment that ensued global financial crisis, Greek Eleftheros Typos daily writes.

For the first time an increase in jobless rate over the last four years was registered in November last year. Then unemployment was 7.8% while the growth of Greek economy slowed down to 2.5%. Four peripheries in Greece were among the worst hit. There the number of jobless people rose to 48%. Unemployment in November 2008 was highest among young people of up to 24 years of age (22.4%) and among women (11.6%).

Greece to open new Acropolis museum in June

ATHENS, Greece: The long-awaited museum where Greece hopes to one day display the Elgin Marbles alongside other ancient masterpieces from the Acropolis will be inaugurated this summer.

Culture Minister Antonis Samaras said Friday the opening ceremony will be held on June 20. Initially, Greece had planned to open the New Acropolis Museum ahead of the 2004 Athens Olympics.

Crouching at the foot of the Acropolis, the new glass and concrete museum is the centerpiece of Greece's campaign for the return of the Elgin — or Parthenon — Marbles from the British Museum in London.

The British Museum has repeatedly refused to relinquish the 2,500-year-old sculptures, which formed part of the Parthenon Temple's decoration until Scottish diplomat Lord Elgin removed them to Britain 200 years ago. At the time, Greece was still an unwilling part of the Ottoman Empire.

The British Museum argues that it legally acquired the Marbles, which



form an integral part of its collection and are easily accessible to visitors from all over the world. But Greek officials say the 129 million-euro (\$166 million) new building will allow all the surviving Parthenon sculptures to be displayed together — with the 5th century B.C. temple appearing as a backdrop through glass walls.

Samaras provided no details on the opening ceremony, but in light of the global economic downturn, Greece has scrapped earlier plans for a €6 million

(\$7.7 million) extravaganza.

"We are cutting spending where we can," Samaras said.

Designed by U.S.-based architect Bernard Tschumi in collaboration with Greece's Michalis Photiadis, the new museum will contain more than 4,000 ancient works in 215,000 square feet (20,000 square meters) of display space.

The project has been dogged by repeated delays and criticized for its size and proximity to the Acropolis — a U.N. world heritage site.

Construction work disrupted an entire neighborhood of ancient and early Christian Athens, prompting legal wrangling. Many of these ruins have been incorporated in the museum basement and are visible through glass panels.

A delicate operation to lift hundreds of statues from an old museum on the Acropolis using cranes was completed in early 2008, prompting officials to promise an opening that September. But the final exhibition blueprint was only approved this week.

The Parthenon was built between 447-432 B.C., at the height of ancient Athens' glory, in honor of Athena, the city's patron goddess.

It survived virtually intact until a massive explosion caused by a Venetian cannon shot in 1687, when the Parthenon was being used a gunpowder warehouse by a Turkish garrison.

Exporing Greece

The Pieria prefecture, southwest of Thessaloniki in Macedonia, is the epitome of the Hellenic landscape — a perfect combination of mountain and sea, hosting not only the country's highest summit, Mytikas (2,917 meters), on legendary Mount of Gods Olympus (or Olympos), but also its longest stretch of beach.

The area — besides its irresistible allure for mountain lovers — presents considerable archaeological interest, and is therefore suitable for breaks and vacations throughout the year. The castle of Platamonas in the south and the sprawling archaeological site of the ancient Macedonian town, Dion, carry great historical appeal. The prefecture's capital, Katerini, is one of Greece's newest towns. Established at the end of 19th century by repatriated Greeks from the area of the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai in Egypt, Katerini is today a modern urban centre with exceptional quality of life.

