

Multicultural Advisory Council to discuss diversity and tolerance

Australia's new Multicultural Advisory Council met for the first time in Canberra to discuss ways the Government can tackle cultural, racial and religious intolerance. The Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, said the 16-member council, chaired by AFL chief executive Andrew Demetriou, will provide invaluable, independent advice to Government.

"The Council will play an important role in articulating the benefits of Australia's diversity and shaping this Government's response to religious and cultural intolerance," Senator Evans said.

"The council will provide advice on the Government's cultural diversity programs, including the Diverse Australia Program launched last month,

and Harmony Day which is celebrated on 21 March."

The council will focus on:

- practical approaches to promoting social cohesion;
- overcoming intolerance and racism in Australia;
- communicating the social and economic benefits of Australia's cultural diversity; and
- the inclusion of migrants in society.

The Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, said Australia's approach to immigration and cultural diversity was a national strength.

"Religious and cultural diversity is a permanent and valuable feature of Australian society and the make-up of the council reflects that diversity," Mr

Ferguson said.

"Independent advice from a council made up of experienced and knowledgeable individuals from diverse backgrounds and professional expertise in industry, community, public and private sectors will assist government in developing and strengthening policies and programs to promote social cohesion."

The members of the council are: Andrew Demetriou (chair), Susai Benjamin, Hass Dellal OAM, Joumanah El Matrah, Carmen Garcia, Sylwia Greda-Bogusz, Rhonda Jacobsen, Gail Ker, Voula Messimeri AM, Nola Randall-Mohk, Brian Schwartz AM, Rauf Soulio, Casta Tungaraza, Craig Waterhouse, Samina Yasmeen and Katie Young OAM.



Sophia Kokosalaki

HELLENIC FASHION ON THE CATWALK

The rise in number of young and talented designers of Greek descent currently living abroad and the development of Hellenic fashion week – a biannual event organized by the Hellenic Fashion Designers Association that began in 2005 – has helped open doors of Greek fashion to foreign observers.

London

Half-Greek, half-Austrian London-based Marios Schwab won Best New Designer award in 2006 and the Swiss Textiles Award in 2007.

A Central Saint Martins graduate who started showing at London Fashion week in the spring/summer 2006 season, he

will be featuring his work again on February 23. Schwab says that the winter 2009 collection was inspired by "destruction, revolution and harmony."

Fellow London-based Saint Martins graduate Mary Katrantzou showed her debut catwalk presentation on February 24, and is being dubbed as "one to watch" by industry insiders. Also on the London front, Vrettos Vrettakos showed his winter collection from February 13-16 as part of the British Fashion Council's exhibition.

Milan

Athens-based duo "Deux Hommes" are setting off to the Italian designer mecca, where the first "made in Italy" collection will be showcased to buyers and the press at the city's Fashion Plan atelier. The Deux Hommes winter 2009 collection will be available for viewing from February 27 to March 4. Another designer, Angelos Frentzos, will also be unveiling

his winter offerings to buyers and the press.

Paris

Athens-born Sophia Kokosalaki has been showing her creations in the last few seasons. The designer started off in London, where she still resides, but has made the French capital her catwalk home. She will be displaying her winter 2009 collection at the Jardin des Tuileries on March 7.

Athens

Athens-based Dimitris Dassios is taking his Uzbekistan-inspired embroideries, velvet, leather and suede jackets and other "jewel art" accessories to Paris and the Tranoi exhibition (March 5-8). Christoforos Kotentos will be receiving buyers by appointment at Paris' West end Hotel (March 5-9), after his scheduled catwalk presentation at London's Park Lane Hotel on February 24. The first Greek fashion week of 2009 is expected to take place at Technopolis from March 27 to 29.

Shark filmed in Sydney Harbour

A Sydney Ferries captain has captured more proof that Sydney Harbour's shark population is thriving as much as ever.

The captain used his mobile phone to film two fishermen pulling in a two-metre shark from the back of their runabout about 100m off Bradley's Head about midday.

Witnesses believe it may be a bull shark.

Cleaner waterways and a spike in the general fish population in Sydney Harbour – attributed to a ban on commercial fishing – are believed to have attracted more sharks to the area. Today's footage comes just two weeks after separate incidents in which a great white shark mauled a surfer and a bull shark attacked a diver.

Navy clearance diver Able Seaman Paul de Gelder, 31, lost his hand and has had his leg amputated after an encounter with a bull shark near Garden Island about dawn on February 11.

The following day 33-year-old Glenn Orgias was surfing at Sydney's Bondi Beach when a 2.5-metre white pointed mauled him. He spoke about the incident for the first time today.

"I didn't see the shark. It let me go after three shakes," he said in a statement.

"By some miracle I made it to the shore.

"A young French surfer applied a tourniquet that, I believe, saved my life. Many others gathered to help me."

Mr Orgias was rushed about six kilometres to St Vincent's Hospital in Darlinghurst, where he underwent 10 hours of microsurgery to reattach the hand.

Plastic surgeon Kevin Ho said he had not expected to save the hand. But Mr Orgias soon regained some feeling in his fingers after a second eight-hour operation.

"Coming by the next day and seeing it still alive, that's fortunate and against expectations," Dr Ho said.

"But it's within the realms of possibility of what I thought would happen when we took him off the table."

Dr Ho was hopeful Mr Orgias would eventually have more function in the reattached hand than he would with a prosthesis.

"I don't want to overshoot the mark. We are over the worst of it, but we're not through the acute stage yet," he said.

Mr Orgias said he was thankful for the medical treatment.

"At the present time, it is not known what will happen to my hand. I have a long fight ahead but could not be working with better people than Dr Kevin Ho and his team," he said. Surgeons at St Vincent's also treated navy diver Mr de Gelder, who was attacked while on an exercise off Garden Island in Sydney Harbour the day before Mr Orgias was mauled.



The Marios Schwab show at London fashion week.