

AUSTRALIA'S MEDIA GIFT ALMOST \$1 MILLION TO ACKNOWLEDGE VOLUNTEERS

A major national campaign has been developed to acknowledge the contribution of Australia's volunteers during the recent spate of natural disasters.

The campaign, produced by Volunteering Australia, has been developed with the pro-bono assistance of advertising and media companies around the country and will be aired on TV stations, radio stations and in cinemas across Australia. Press ads will also appear in many major metropolitan, regional and local papers.

The campaign is set to Dorothea Mackellar's epic poem, "My Country". It shows the tremendous range of contributions from volunteers of all kinds and from all walks of life.

"The list of contributors to the campaign demonstrates how profoundly Australians appreciate volunteers," said Volunteering Australia CEO Cary Pedicini. "We were amazed at how enthusiastically the advertising and media industries have been in embracing this campaign."

The advertising concept was contributed by Melbourne advertising agency, Accelerator. The use of "My Country" was donated for use by the Dorothea Mackellar estate, while news footage was contributed by Seven News. Production facilities were donated by Hub, Burning House and Good Audio Sense.

In a stunning contribution from Australia's media, coordinated by media heavyweight Harold Mitchell, almost a million dollars in scheduled media has been donated to the campaign already.

Major national insurer AAMI also made an invaluable financial contribution to cover some of the hard costs involved in producing the campaign and dispatching messages to the nation's media.

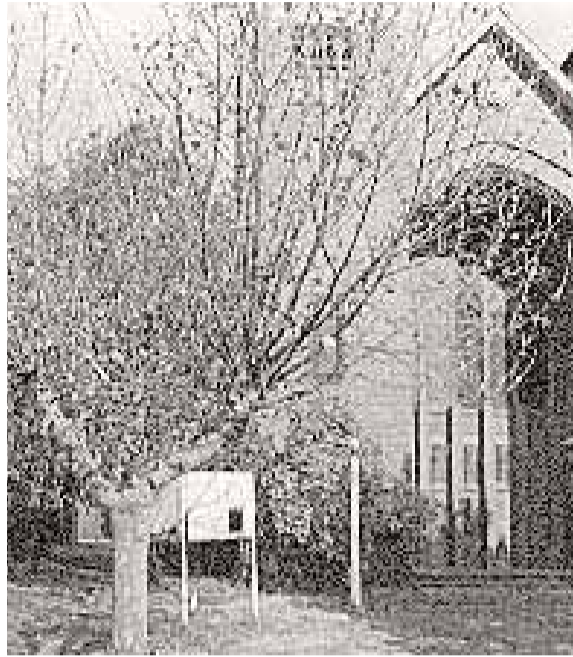
"We can't thank the contributors to this campaign enough", said Mr Pedicini. "Volunteers don't look for acknowledgement but we know they appreciate it when it's there. We are very grateful for the support of so many organisations including the campaign sponsor AAMI."

Accelerator principal Phil Huzzard was equally enthusiastic about the contribution of the industry. "Every organisation we went to helped us in some shape or form," he said. "And some of the contributions were breathtaking in their size and quality."

The campaign hits the air and is in print from this weekend on media throughout Australia.

National Volunteer Week will be held from 11th to 17th May.

Blaze destroys Greek church hall



A popular church hall has been gutted in a suspicious blaze in Melbourne's east which caused surrounding homes to be evacuated overnight. The Arson Squad is on its way to St Catherine's Greek Orthodox Church after the fire destroyed its neighbouring hall in Epping Street, Malvern East, just before 4am.

Police believe the fire was deliberately lit and have called on witnesses to contact Crime Stoppers. Residents from six homes were evacuated as the fire ripped through the weatherboard building.

More than five hours after the fire started the building is still smouldering, the roof of the church hall has collapsed and only a shell remains.

Firefighters were able to stop the blaze before it spread across a connecting roof to the nearby church.

Local parishioner Jim Dandanis said at the scene that St Catherine's had a strong congregation and was well connected with its local community.

He said the church hall was used for meetings, gatherings after memorial services and as a Greek school for children.

"It's very sad, (the hall) is an integral part of the church," he said.

Mr Dandanis said the Greek church was beginning its pre-Easter holy week on Sunday. He said he did not know how services would be affected, but he was sure parishioners would attend.

Anyone with information can contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000 or go to www.crimestoppers.com.au

Article from THE AGE

Bishop sorry for those who burned church

POLICE have ruled out a molotov cocktail as the cause of a fire that destroyed a million-dollar church building and threatened nearby homes in East Malvern.

While the community at St Catherine's Greek Orthodox church vowed to rebuild the hall destroyed in the early morning blaze, police continued investigations into what they believe was a deliberately lit fire.

Residents were evacuated from homes near the Epping Street church as firefighters were concerned about burning embers blowing towards the buildings.

The fire brigade stopped the blaze spreading to the historical church building, which was connected to the weatherboard hall by a wooden walkway.

Bishop Ezekiel, an assistant bishop to the Greek Orthodox Archbishop of Australia, said at the church yesterday that he felt sorry for those responsible for the fire. "Something (is) wrong with them, so if they do such an act, it's something which is very bad for the rest of the community," he said.

"It was a historical hall and we renovated it recently. And it was really beautiful. Inside, we had a lot of things, antiques, pictures and so on. All gone."

Asked if he was angry or disappointed, Bishop Ezekiel replied: "Not really. As Christians, we have to forgive everybody."

He said the fire would not stop services in the lead-up to Greek Easter on Sunday week. He said the hall would be rebuilt. Architect Con Moschogiannis, who was involved in the award-winning restoration, said many volunteers had helped.

Easter egg hunt with no chocolate at the end

IN THE lead-up to Easter, members of Australia's Greek Orthodox community conduct their own kind of egg hunt. Each year they go looking not for chocolate eggs but for white ones, the kind that are good for colour dyeing.

But in the past four decades, Australian egg producers have made this hunt difficult. They have slowly replaced their white birds, which lay white eggs, with more efficient brown birds, which lay brown eggs.

This trend, which started in the 1970s and has gone largely unnoticed by consumers, is the reason shoppers today will rarely find a white egg in their carton during the weekly shop.

Ian Savenake of Farm Pride says in recent years at

the company he has seen lighter shades of brown eggs but never a bright white egg. "We don't sell a single white egg. If you look at a palette of eggs as they come off the grading floor, they go from a

light brown to almost a pinky hue. I don't think I have ever seen a true A4 paper white egg."

Jacqueline Baptista, of the Australian Egg Corporation, believes less

than 3 per cent of eggs laid in Australia are white.

Each year, she gets calls from people on the hunt for white eggs to dye, "particularly the Greek community, that's obviously a huge thing".

She said the corporation directed people to egg producers such as the Egg Basket, in western Sydney.

Owner George Holland says business for white eggs booms at Easter but dies down at other times of the year. "The worst part about being a producer of white eggs is that after they are used for Orthodox celebrations, you don't have any market for them."

The Greek Orthodox community will celebrate Easter Sunday next week.

Article from THE AGE



Ian Savenake of Farm Pride says white eggs are difficult to find as the more efficient layers are brown hens - and they lay only brown eggs. Photo: Luis Enrique Ascui