

Modern Greek Studies: An Endangered Species

During the course my university years, which are now approaching close to 20 years, there have been concerns over the closure of Modern Greek studies across many tertiary institutions in Australia. Closer to home, the University of New South Wales or UNSW, has always been one of these universities where the threat has been very real. Throughout these years though, Greek community leaders, organisations and student bodies such as Hellsoc have managed to somehow breathe life back into the Modern Greek cause and it has somehow survived.

It seems though we have to battle again with the announcement of the imminent closure of the Modern Greek studies at UNSW. We have heard through various sources that there are no plans from the university to offer Modern Greek as a subject in 2010 at its own campus. If students are interested in studying Modern Greek they will have to enrol at another university, reportedly Sydney University.

The Hellenic Society of UNSW Hellsoc had organised a barbecue this week in order to raise awareness of the closure of the Modern Greek studies. It was announced that it was to be a peaceful gathering, to cook a few souvlakia and spread the message to those that gathered. There was a petition letter offered to students to sign to send a message to the Dean of the languages department and to the Vice Chancellor. There was also a promotion for a prize that is being offered to students that enrol in Modern Greek.

Hellsoc members also promoted the event through a Facebook group and I am not sure how else the news spread.



There was also a plea through the Facebook group that the event was not to have any slogans either as part of an agreement with the university administration.

However being Greek, the revolutionary gene is hard to ignore even in those that are Australian born. A banner with a slogan was put up and sources have told me that it did upset certain people in the university.

It must also be made known to everyone that not only Hellsoc members turned up to the event. Other Greek university and non-university associations did turn up for support.

What was evident from a "neutral" observer to the event is that there was not a common agenda from all those present. Personally this saddened me and instead of presenting a joint front the Greeks once again showed how quickly we faction amongst ourselves.

So why has it come to this again? We can come up with many reasons and theories (even conspiracy theo-

ries being Greeks) as to how this decision has come about by the university.

Bottom line though comes down to this question. Where are the students interested in studying Modern Greek?

We can fight for the Modern Greek studies to remain open but what is the point if there are no students enrolling?

The fact is that most students of Hellenic descent studying at UNSW don't choose Modern Greek and that's a shame. Some of us studied at other universities where the option to select a General Studies subject was not available and could not take advantage of what our friends had available to them at UNSW.

We can't blame the students alone in this. Parents who send their children to universities to do an economics, science or law degree probably don't encourage them to take Modern Greek as a General Studies subject.

I want to make it clear that I do not support the university's decision. But

with the enrolment numbers in Modern Greek dwindling and becoming ever so fewer, is it not justified for an organisation to consider closing down a non-profitable unit?

Personally the root of the problem is simple. Modern Greek at tertiary level is becoming an endangered species.

Not enough students are enrolling in Modern Greek.

Unless this is addressed we are at risk of not only UNSW closing its Modern Greek unit but unfortunately our other 2 remaining universities Sydney and Macquarie will be at risk as well.

Its unfortunate that with 3 Greek colleges in Sydney that we do not have a bigger supply of students entering universities with the desire to continue their Modern Greek studies in their tertiary studies. On top of those 3 colleges we have numerous other Modern Greek students from other private and public schools as well that seem to not want to pursue studying Modern Greek at university.

As a community we need to target these children and find out the reasons. We need as a collective to promote the benefits of keeping the richest language alive and well in our new country.

It is imperative as a community we unite on this issue and to not bring our own agenda to the problem. Otherwise my dear fellow Hellenes, maybe not our children but very likely our grandchildren will one day say "Oh yeah, my grandparents spoke Greek".

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Sydney's Romeo and Juliet lovers tell why they ran away

SYDNEY'S own Romeo and Juliet, 18-year-old lovers **Dean Paitos** and **Patricia Nikolakopoulos**, are back under separate roofs after a police search found them holed up in a Liverpool motel.

The pair went home after turning themselves in to police yesterday, 36 hours after Ms Nikolakopoulos's parents reported her as kidnapped.

They fled after an argument with Ms Nikolakopoulos's parents at their home on Monday night.

Police, concerned for Ms Nikolakopoulos's safety, began an immediate search for the couple.

That was until they called Mr Paitos's mother Judith to tell her that her son was missing.

No, they are not, she told them. They are at a motel in Liverpool.

Yesterday the couple walked out of Hurstville police station arm-in-arm, with Mr Paitos's mother by their side.

"They obviously over-exaggerated, saying I kidnapped her," Mr Paitos said. "I wanted to leave and she ran out and jumped into the car with me."

While both families are of Greek heritage, Mrs Paitos blamed the pressure on their relationship on a "culture problem". The couple has been together for more than two years.

Ms Nikolakopoulos confirmed that her family objected to her being in a serious relationship at such a young age but she had no plans to end it.

After fleeing her parents' home, the pair checked into the motel and spoke honestly about their future together. They are adamant they will remain together, despite the objections.

Mr Paitos's shy nature seems at odds with his actions. But he remains resolute.

"I didn't even know we were supposedly missing until this morning," he said. "When I say 'this morning' I mean just after midnight.

"They knocked on the door at midnight and after talking to her they said it was okay."

Police politely left the couple, asking them to report to Hurstville police station in the morning.

"We came here this morning and everything got sorted out," Mr Paitos said.

Ms Nikolakopoulos described their relationship as "very good".

"We will be together," Mr Paitos said.

Their love, he said, was genuine.

"I wouldn't do it if I didn't love her," he said.

The couple's romance stirred the echoes of Shakespeare's Romeo And Juliet, the star-crossed lovers



who ignored their warring families to continue their secret romance.

This one ended a little more happily, though.

Source: The Daily Telegraph