

Old political foes call for return of lost marbles

FORMER prime ministers Gough Whitlam and Malcolm Fraser have united behind fresh efforts urging Britain to return the Parthenon sculptures to Greece. They are co-patrons of Australians For The Return Of The Parthenon Marbles (ARPM), which renewed its call for the artefacts' return as Greece prepares to officially open the Acropolis Museum.

More than 100 marble statues and sculptured fragments were stripped from the temple 200 years ago by the then British ambassador Lord Elgin. For decades, those items, also known as the Elgin Marbles, have been housed in the British Museum.

"There are few cultural objects that have the same significance and meaning as these magnificent sculptures from the high point of the classic age of Greece," Mr Whitlam said.



"The Parthenon sculptures are unarguably among the world's most important surviving art

works. The new Acropolis Museum gives the British Museum the opportunity of righting one of history's great wrongs.

"There is no longer any justification for keeping the collection in the Duveen Gallery at the back of the British Museum now that the sculptures can be reunited and exhibited with the other surviving statues of the Acropolis."

David Hill, the former ABC managing director turned archaeologist and author who is leading ARPM, said: "It is terrific that these two great political foes have joined so solidly together to help our fight on this important issue."

Mr Hill will be Australia's representative for the launch next weekend in Athens of the Acropolis Museum, which has been designed to exhibit all of the surviving 2500-year-old Parthenon sculptures.



October decision on Dr Pegios likely

A NSW Dental Board Tribunal is expected to set a date in October to announce its decision in relation to the case of Brighton-Le-Sands dentist George Pegios.

A tribunal hearing initiated by the Healthcare Complaints Commission, which pushed for Dr Pegios to be struck off, concluded last month.

Dr Pegios was cleared of manslaughter in Sydney District Court last year after the death of a patient in November 2002 during a dental implant procedure. The patient suffered a critical loss of blood oxygen saturation.

In court the Crown alleged Dr Pegios negligently administered excessive drugs and negligently failed to respond appropriately when the patient's oxygen levels dipped. Judge Helen Murrell found him not guilty of a charge of manslaughter by gross negligence.

A Healthcare Complaints Commission spokeswoman said the tribunal would set a date to announce its decision in the coming weeks.

Britons warned over rise in Greek holiday 'binge-drinking' rapes

The British consul in Crete is to hold urgent meetings with tour operators and local officials after two British tourists and a Dutch teenager were subjected to alleged gang rapes on the island and in another popular Greek party destination, the island of Kos.

The attacks have heightened concerns among Greek officials that a binge-drinking culture in many of the country's resorts has fuelled a spate of rapes that threatens to tarnish its tourist industry even before the summer season starts.

"It has become glaringly obvious that unacceptable things are happening in our resorts," said Nikos Markakis, Crete's leading law enforcement official. Markakis said that he was particularly worried about the situation in Mallia, the resort on Crete with an "anything goes" reputation.

"This week I demanded that patrols be stepped up in Mallia as never before," he said. "The season has barely begun and already it has been sullied by incidents of rape involving Britons. It's out-of-control behaviour that is almost always brought on by outrageous binge drinking in bar crawls organised by tour operators."

Excess alcohol was cited by the three Britons arrested in Mallia last week after a 20-year-old English woman, on her first unescorted holiday abroad, told police she had been gang-raped on 5 June. "She was very traumatised," said Emanuel Samaritakis, a local police officer. "She said that she had gone back to a holiday apartment to watch television with them when suddenly they turned on

her."

The men, who denied the charges, were allowed to fly home after posting bail of £3,000 (£2,500) each and promising to return to Crete for the trial - "something that I have to say is never certain", said Samaritakis. "The two Greeks who attacked a Dutch woman as she sunbathed on a beach were also arrested," he added.

In Kos, police are continuing to hunt for five eastern European immigrants who are believed to have brutally assaulted another English tourist.

Last year exasperated residents of Mallia took to the streets to protest against the mass drunkenness of tourists in the town. Greece now holds the unenviable record of having more rapes per head of population of UK tourists than any other holiday destination in the world. One third of British women raped overseas between 1994 and 2000 were assaulted in Greek resorts, with many blaming fellow Britons for the attacks, according to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Latest figures show that

the problem has far from improved. In the year beginning 1 April 2006, there were 28 cases of reported rape involving British women in Greece, compared with 29 in Spain. Set against the number of UK tourists to both countries - three million in Greece and the 17 million who visit Spain every year - the number is even more alarming, officials say. All other countries, with the exception of Cyprus and Turkey, averaged no more than two rapes a year.

Preventative measures have been increased in prime resorts this summer. With British government support, street lighting has been improved while mayors and policemen have been sent to the UK on "rape awareness" seminars. A crackdown has also been imposed on bars serving "bombes" - drinks laced with lethal doses of industrial spirit that have also been blamed for the unruly behaviour of tourists. Mixed by unscrupulous proprietors to make their beverages go further, doctors have likened the drinks to a "small bomb going off in the brain".

The FCO is also intensifying an anti-rape campaign. An estimated 100,000 posters, postcards, beer mats and leaflets - some bearing the warning "rape happens on holiday too" - are to be distributed across resorts.

