

Alleged Theophanous victim tried to coach friend – court

A WOMAN who says she was raped by a State MP tried to coach her friend to give false evidence, a court has heard.

Sitting Labor MP and former cabinet minister Theo Theophanous is charged with raping a woman on a couch in State Parliament in 1998.

In her statement tendered to the Melbourne Magistrates' Court earlier this week, the alleged victim said she called several friends during and after the alleged incident to tell them she was distressed by an encounter with Theophanous.

Yesterday, two of the women denied she had called them.

One of the women said she was no longer friends with the alleged victim because she told her to lie about the matter.

"She wanted me to help her out with the case," the woman said.

"She was coaching me to say things. She was asking me to give false evidence."

The woman also denied a series of emails supposedly exchanged between her and the victim were legitimate.

Another woman told the Melbourne Magistrates' Court she received a letter and an email from the alleged victim which referred to a conversation the victim said they had. But the woman said no such conversation took place.

The alleged victim said in her letter that she'd been unable in the past to fully reveal details of what happened and told her that "the red couch was a nightmare experience, it is called rape".

In later correspondence, the alleged victim told her friend she was coming to Australia from Greece in a couple of weeks and there would be something in the newspapers and she would make lots of money.

The two women were called to give evidence today after the court heard the alleged victim was not well enough to continue with her evidence. It is expected the alleged victim will resume her evidence when the committal hearing before magistrate Peter Reardon continues.



MasterChef judge George Calombaris in Mykonos

MEDITERRANEAN dish and MasterChef Australia judge George Calombaris, 30, has fled the show's headquarters to take a holiday in Greece.

Calombaris, who has become an unlikely sex symbol thanks to his boyish looks and expert skills in the kitchen, and who has a huge follow-

ing in Greek mothers hunting for a future son-in-law, will spend some time relaxing at the beach.

But he will also be spending some time in the kitchen of his restaurant, The Belvedere Club, in the Belvedere Hotel on the party island of Mykonos.

Article from The Courier Mail

Turkey might reopen Greek seminary

European Union candidate Turkey has signalled it might reopen a Greek Orthodox seminary on an island near Istanbul following pressure from the EU and US President Barack Obama, who has called for its restoration.

The Halki seminary, or Heybeliada in Turkish, has become a symbol for the call for greater religious freedom for non-Muslims in mainly Muslim but officially secular Turkey.

The European Union, which Turkey hopes to join, has made its reopening a litmus test of Ankara's commitment to religious freedom.

Here is a summary of events, and prospects for the seminary's reopening.

Why was the seminary closed?

Turkey closed Halki in 1971 during a period of tension with Greece over Cyprus and a crackdown on religious education that also included Islamist schools. The seminary opened in 1844, as part of a monastery founded on the island in the ninth century, and supplied priests for the Ottoman Empire's Greek minority.

What are the main stumbling blocks?

Turkey, whose population is 99% Muslim and strictly controls religion, has argued it cannot reopen the Christian seminary without letting Islamist groups set up their own schools that could radicalise local Muslims.

Ankara is also wary of any step that might strengthen the Orthodox Church's Ecumenical Patriarchate and lead to a kind of Orthodox Vatican in Istanbul.

The closure of the seminary has made it near impossible to find a successor to Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, 69.

The law says students must be Turkish citizens, a severe restriction



at a time when emigration has reduced the once-large ethnic Greek population in Istanbul to about 2,500. Turkey denies he is the spiritual leader of the world's 250 million Orthodox faithful.

Why is the reopening of the seminary important?

Brussels, which has long criticised Turkey's treatment of its non-Muslim populations, has said the closure of the seminary is a breach of human rights.

Obama said in a trip to Turkey earlier this year that reopening the school would show a commitment to freedom of religion and expression.

The opening of the school would also be likely to improve relations with historical rivals and EU-members Greece and Cyprus, which has vetoed the opening of several of Turkey's accession chapters.

What are government, political parties saying?

The ruling AK Party, which has its roots in political Islam, has yet to formulate an official policy on the opening of the school, despite recent statements from two ministers saying the school should be opened.

Patriarch Kirill, leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, said on Monday during a news conference with the head of Turkey's Religious Affairs Directorate, Ali Bardakoglu,

that he had information that the seminary would be opened shortly.

Turkey's opposition Nationalist Movement Party, which has seen its votes steadily rise in the last several elections, has spoken out against the reopening of the school.

They criticise the prospect of boosting religious rights for Christians without assuring devout Muslim females the right to wear the Islamic headscarf in the national school system.

The main opposition People's Republican Party has said the opening of the school would allow Islamic groups to demand their own schools, anathema to many within the country's staunchly secularist establishment.

The ruling AK Party, which saw support drop in March local election, has presided over record unemployment and a near 14% economic contraction in the first quarter amid the global crisis. The party might be reluctant to make a move that could be used to stir up popular angst.

What could happen next?

If Halki does not open, the Patriarch may bring the issue before the United Nations as the closure of the school contradicts the 1923 Lausanne Treaty, which outlines the rights of religious minorities within Turkey, a lawyer for the Patriarch Kezban Hatemi said.

\$180,000 for wildfire victims in Victoria

In an announcement, the Press and Communications Office has notified that Greek economic aid for those affected by last February's wildfires in the Australian state of Victoria has been delivered to the proper Australian authorities. The announcement notes: "The Greek Government offered the sum of A\$180,000 as emergency aid for the relief of the fire victims, to the Victoria Bushfire Recovery and Reconstruction Authority.

"Having had the sad experience of the devastating repercussions from forest fires, Greece offered this amount as a symbolic aid gesture to help reconstruct and recover the affected regions. At the same time, this gesture acknowledges Australia's generous support for Greek fire victims a few years ago".