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⇒ **LONG LIVE HELLSOC!**

This week I have a very special article for you all...

Not much to do with sport as such, but far more important nonetheless.

Last week I had the pleasure of being one of the invited guests to the 35th Anniversary of HELLSOC- or better known as the Hellenic Society of the University of New South Wales.

⇒ **HELLSOC ORIGINS...**

HELLSOC was formed in August 1974 as a direct result of the Cyprus crisis, and the apathy and indifference

displayed by the community in general and the Greek youth in particular. The name of the society then was 'The Pan-Hellenic Humanitarian

Youth Organisation'. The name was subsequently changed to the Hellenic Youth Society.

It was a medium by which Greek students at the University of NSW could be informed of issues that pertained and affected their history, culture, politics, language and religion. HELLSOC stands as a society that is completely apolitical and has its sole objective to unite Greek students and promote Hellenism. The society's main objectives are:

1. To encourage, foster, develop and extend Hellenism on and off-campus
2. To promote Greek culture, tradition, religion and education
3. To establish and maintain a Modern Greek Department at the University of New South Wales

The society has the important goal of encouraging Australian-born Greeks to feel proud of their heritage by developing an understanding and love for things Greek. Over the years, the Society has raised money and public awareness of its cause and in 1989, the Modern Greek Studies program was officially established.

The committee had raised \$40,000, and approximately 50 students commenced learning Modern Greek at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels. Since the program's inception the Hellenic Society has managed to raise over \$120,000 through its activities, the Greek Community, the Orthodox Church, the Greek business community, and the support of its members and friends.

By 1996, with Community support, the Greek Studies Foundation raised over \$300,000 to establish Greek at UNSW.

We have all noticed and enjoyed the fact that the Greek influence abounds

in Australian culture lately, particularly through the youth. Through the establishment of Greek university societies, an awareness and pride of our past has been attained. Greek identity shines brightly through the university scene. Nearly every major university in NSW has its own Hellenic society.

But do not underestimate the never-ending battle to maintain Greek at UNSW!

⇒ **35th ANNIVERSARY**

Which brings me back to last Friday evening...

It was great to see HELLSOC reach the 35-year milestone- and along the way have such wonderful Presidents of the organisation such as Con Vertzayias and Tom Doumanis to name a few. In fact Mr. Vertzayias and his son Dion are the only "father-and-son" combination to have presided over HELLSOC.

Watching our future youth, so proud of their Greek heritage, enjoy and celebrate in the manner that only Greeks know how! It was an impressive evening, and one I will certainly not forget. I look forward to seeing many of these fine upstanding members of society carve out illustrious careers in the future.

Ioannis Pitsas, the CEO for Education Affairs stated, "the society you represent has inspired and energised many young people of Greek descent to fulfil their dreams and achieve their goals, both collectively and individually".

According to the Hon. Mr. John Hatzistergos, "The study of Modern Greek is not only about the getting of knowledge; it is also about learning to be creative and imaginative. These are the vital qualities in one's personal and of course professional development. Former students of the department have moved on to rewarding careers in such diverse areas as education, media, law, politics and social work".

⇒ **FORMER PRESIDENT MR. CON VERTZAYIAS**

It was truly an honour to hear one of HELLSOC's former Presidents speak during the evening and I would like to share his inspiring thoughts with you...

"Throughout those 35 years HELLSOC has been arguably Australia's most successful Greek-Australian organisation in terms of numbers and the zeal with which it has promoted Hellenism. KAI STA EKATO.

No issue is more important than the maintenance of the Greek language at all levels. Its survival is synonymous with the very existence of our community with its unique identity. This year has been especially challenging at UNSW as a result of the University's efforts to downgrade Greek studies.



With **LAKIS KONISTIS**

Sports World

It is therefore imperative that HELLSOC members enrol in the courses that are being offered so that we can show that there IS a demand for the subject. At the end of the day, it will not help to emphasise the important contribution that the Greek language has made to world civilisation because what counts is students' numbers".

⇒ **SIMILAR SENTIMENTS FROM MR. H. DANALIS**

Such views and concerns were further shared by the President of the Greek Orthodox Community of NSW, Mr. Harry Danalis.

"The celebration of the 35th anniversary of HELLSOC comes at a crucial time for the maintenance and teaching of the Greek language in Australia at all levels of education. In the absence of commitment from State and Federal Governments for the teaching of community languages it is imperative that we as Greek Australians unite in our efforts to ensure the survival of our language in Australia and thus preserve our cultural heritage and identity".

In particular, "the recent attempts to downgrade the teaching of Greek at UNSW must be resisted by all, and we congratulate HELLSOC for taking on the challenge and being at the forefront of the struggles to reverse the short sighted decisions taken by the University in recent times".

⇒ **LEADER JAMES THEODOROPOULOS**

The person in the forefront of this challenge, and one of the very people who ought to be congratulated for the wonderful evening at the Grand Roxy last week, is HELLSOC's current President James Theodoropoulos.

James' father (John Theodoropoulos), was a former long-serving President of the Canterbury Marrickville Olympic Soccer Club who I had the pleasure of sharing many years with.

According to James, "We all rallied together on the 15th September in a protest against those seeking to destroy what we have fought hard for so long to uphold. I hope that those of you who follow will continue to fight the fight and continue to uphold the traditions and culture that have been passed onto us by our parents and grandparents; and hopefully we can convince these

institutions that the Greek language is indeed worth supporting".

Due to dwindling student numbers, the Greek Department at UNSW is under great pressure- it remains under serious threat of extinction. HELLSOC's task will therefore be to do all it can to assure the continuation of a department which so many people have worked so hard to create, and of course the students who will still gain so much benefit from".

Fellow student Harry Mavrolettis sums this benefit up for us. "It is an incomparable feeling to know inside you that there are others in this world who care about you and who you care about, and the impact of constantly being surrounded by such people is truly phenomenal. Aristotle tells us that friendship can be on the basis of one of three things: 'usefulness, pleasantness and goodness'. While it was useful and pleasant to have Greek friends on campus, I would like to think that the relationships we forged over the years were out of this virtue and deep admiration as Aristotle would have it".

Or what about this from Jenni Galatis: "HELLSOC is like the Greek-Australian Horio which we are all from. Like most parts of Greece, we have our own 'simvoulio'. we organise parties, fundraisers, tavernas and 'horous'. This only further emphasises how we are a reflection of the ideals and cultures taught to us by our families. We are an indication that we love to stick together, as we feel that connection with no other.... Ye, the Empire may have taken time off for an extended game of 'tavli', but in us all is that yearning to conquer, to fight for what is rightfully ours, and to uphold the ideals and values that have been passed on for centuries by our ancestors".

⇒ **UNSW's POSITION**

At present, UNSW has made only marginal effort to promote and support Modern Greek and other languages. It continues to fail to recognise not only the cultural importance of languages, but also the economic advantages that they provide in a global and integrated world economy.

But judging from the passion, the intensity, the dedication, the commitment from our Greek youth which I had the pleasure of experiencing first hand last week, this battle is far from over.

Happy 35th Anniversary HELLSOC... na ta ekatostisete!

⇒ **MERRY CHRISTMAS**

As another year is headed for a close, I would like to sincerely wish all our "O KOSMOS" readers a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous and healthy 2010.

God bless you all.