

# Why Greeks call Australia home

Thomas Andronas chats with three prominent Greek-Australians to find out their thoughts on celebrating Australia Day. All three will be involved with events on our country's national day.

## Mike Zafiropoulos

Mike Zafiropoulos came to Australia as an 18-year-old computer science student in 1967.

"My intention was to return back when I finished my studies but as it happens with a lot of people, with the exception of Ulysses, I ended up staying here, and I haven't regretted that decision," he says.

Having held many positions along the way, he is now a board member of Channel 31 and a lifetime Australia Day Ambassador.

And he thinks he knows what it means to be Australian.

"It means that you belong to a family.

It means that you are committed to that family. You plan with the rest of the family the direction you will take, you care for the country, you work hard to help other members of the family and you share with them the skills and the other benefits that you enjoy."

"So it's a sharing experience, it's an experience of pride and loyalty, it's an experience of pride that you're a member of the nation," he says.

Zafiropoulos' Australia Day message this year to those gathered at a ceremony in Berwick will be that as Australia continues to grow, it must also continue to successfully manage its cultural diversity.

And as an Australia Day Ambassador he will continue to encourage newly arrived people to become Australian citizens.

"If people come here and they intend to stay and settle and raise a family then it would be unwise not to become a citizen."

"My advice to them would be to become part of the family, be an equal



Mike Zafiropoulos, his wife Despina and his children, Anastasia and Nikolas, celebrating Australia Day.

member of the family, enjoy the privileges and advantages that citizenship gives you, and not only the rights but the responsibilities that you have as a citizen."

"It's a good thing that you display through that symbolic conversion to membership of the family that you are willing to be a contributing member of the nation," he says.

## George Lekakis

George Lekakis is Chairperson of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, and an Australia Day Ambassador.

"This is the greatest country in the world," he says.

Lekakis was born in Australia to Greek parents and was twelve years old when he watched them take their citizenship oath. He says it was one of the proudest

days of his life.

"It was a big honour for my parents to become Australians and I was extremely proud that they had taken that step. It was good for them to feel that they were part of the Australian community, and to feel that they were equal citizens with everybody else."

"I think that's the greatest thing that citizenship allows you to participate regardless of who you are and where you come from," he says.

This Australia Day Lekakis will be speaking at a gathering in Rosedale, 90 minutes east of Melbourne.

His Australia Day message will be one of awe and inspiration:

"I love this country more than any other. It is my home, and some of the great things about Australia are its people, and its history, and of course its great geography and all its natural beauty."

"It's a unique experience (to be an Australian) because you are enriched by so many different cultures and what they have to offer," he says.

## Stella Kariofyllidis

Stella Kariofyllidis came to Australia in 1969, aged 14.

Thirty-one years later she became the first Greek-born female mayor in Australia, and after a break was re-elected in December 2009.

Being the first female migrant mayor is important not only for me as an individual getting to that point, but I think that it's important because I represent all those women that came from Greece on the plane or on the ship, full of dreams to have a better life. I feel really privileged that I represent that community," she says.

Having been naturalized herself at age 17, this Australia Day she will bestow citizenship on 80 of her constituents in the City of Moreland.

"It is really heartwarming to see the people, they are really proud when they do it."

"The people that decide to become naturalized feel really good about it and all want to take photos with the mayor, and they are really proud that they have taken that step," she says.

And her message this Australia Day is that Australian citizenship is something to be respected and cherished:

"Enjoy it, it is the best country in the world as far as I am concerned."

"Be proud to be Australian, work hard and you will achieve," she says.

Article from Neos Kosmos

## Towers Clocks, memories of another era

Tower Clocks constitute a landmark in many towns in Northern Greece and bear witness to the local history which is closely linked with the history of the city's residents. Tower Clocks have been the meeting point for the locals and the visitors throughout the centuries and are part of the citizens' day-to-day

life. Several municipalities have started restoration works in an effort to further upgrade their town Clocks. The older Clock Tower, not only in Northern Greece but in the Balkans, is located in Yanitsa city in Pella prefecture. The 14m high Clock Tower was built in 1753 with stones and adobe. A s-



mall wooden tower which was attached on the top to protect and roof the bell has not been saved. Restoration works of the

Grevena city Tower Clock have been completed recently. The clock was constructed in 1776 and was destroyed in 1820 by the Turks and was rebuilt in 1906.

The clock is the emblem of Grevena municipality. The Tower clocks in the cities of Edessa, Naoussa, Kozani and Xanthi are still working, reminding to the city residents that time passes incessantly and is merciless for all.

## Greek composer wins int'l distinctions

Two international distinctions for two music compositions were won by Tina Tonia, a graduate of Thessaloniki's Aristotle University (AUTH) Music Studies Department.

Tonia, who has received a postgraduate degree from the University of Edinburgh, won the third prize in the Golden Key International Piano Composition Competition with the work "Garden of Illusions" composed while studying at AUTH. She was distinguished among 46 competitors from the USA, China, Australia and Portugal, among others, and her award winning work will be presented in the International Festival of Vienna (July 12-19).

The second award winning work titled "Prismatic" was distinguished for its modern and innovative music in the London Contemporary Orchestra competition and will be performed at Boston University on Jan. 27.

## New book focuses on WWII war reparations issue

The Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece (KIS) on Monday presented a book by university professor Konstantinos Magliveras entitled "The issue of War Reparations for Looting During the Nazi Occupation of Greece: The Case of the Monetary Gold of the Jews." Speaking at a book launch in the foreign ministry building, KIS President Moses Constantinis stressed that "the research conducted by the author proves that Greece was not adequately compensated by the Allies who handled the reparations paid by Germany."