

I still call Greece home: Australians ready to stay put during debt crisis

ATHENS: Come what may, Australians of Greek descent living back in the country of their forebears say they want to ride out the financial crisis that has Greece teetering on the edge of bankruptcy.

“I think we all want to tough it out,” says Amalia Travarasou, 64, president of the Greek Australian Society of Athens.

“It’s hard enough for the family when they emigrate the first time,” Ms Travarasou told the Herald. “Then to move back to Greece again is also difficult. So the idea of packing up and going back to Australia - again - I think we all prefer to just visit from time to time.”

Ms Travarasou, who has three uncles living in Melbourne, says that after the Greek and Australian governments agreed on a way to share pension payments for dual citizens, Australians of Greek descent have felt more financially secure.

“My son, who is 24, wants to move to Australia to work, but not because of the crisis. I



Stavros Orthanoyiannis ... no plans to move. Photo: Jason Koutsoukis

think he is just interested in seeing another part of the world and experiencing something different for a while,” she said.

Stavros Orthanoyiannis, 62, a former Sydneysider who studied engineering at the University of Sydney, moved back to Greece in the mid-1970s after the fall of the military junta.

“I thought to myself, ‘Is this it?’ Am I going to remain in this corner of the world or go and do something different?”

After setting up home in A-

thens, Mr Orthanoyiannis worked as a high school teacher. Today he is a senior mathematics teacher at the prestigious Douka School in Athens that provides tuition from preschool through to secondary school. Despite facing a cut to his pension of up to 25 per cent after the passing of new laws aimed at reining in Greece’s massive debt, Mr Orthanoyiannis says things are not as bad as they seem.

“I’ve had several emails from people asking me, ‘Is it safe to go to Athens?’ From

all the media coverage you would think we were living in Beirut or the Gaza Strip.

“The situation is being presented as a choice between two roads. One is financial devastation for all citizens, the other is national bankruptcy. But I don’t believe in such stark choices. I feel very strongly that Greeks can find a way through this.”

Not a supporter of one political party or another, Mr Orthanoyiannis says he was one of tens of thousands protesting against the introduction of the

austerity package. “The main thrust is cutting back on the state sector and, ultimately, that means cutting back on democracy,” he said.

Dentist Penny Andreopoulos, who moved to Greece from Sydney when she was 25 in the mid-1980s, says she hasn’t visited Australia since. “Occasionally my husband and I think about going there for a holiday. But it’s so difficult to find the time.”

A former president of the Greek Australian Professional Association, Ms Andreopoulos says she is unaware of any growing panic in the tight-knit Australian Greek community.

“Yes, there is a financial crisis, but who says there is a guarantee of a job waiting for you back in Australia?”

“Of course, we Greeks have done some silly things in these past years but I think we can climb out of it. Everyone said we couldn’t stage the Olympics and look at how that turned out. We made it happen, and I think we will make it through this.”

JASON KOUTSOUKIS
HERALD CORRESPONDENT
Article from Sydney Morning Herald

Health claims for chocolate shot through the heart

YOU are not going to want to read this: chocolate cannot be relied upon as a source of antioxidants to boost cardiovascular health. But it gets worse: drinking coffee and red wine in the hope it will prevent heart disease doesn’t work either.

Fans of Turkish or Greek coffee have now been warned that their boiled coffee contains more bad cholesterol-bearing oil than filtered Italian coffee varieties.

The brutal news was delivered yesterday by the Heart Foundation following a review of more than 100 international studies on antioxidants from the past decade.

The Heart Foundation’s national director of healthy weight, Susan Anderson, said the benefits of dark chocolate, coffee and red wine had been overstated, and the review was conducted following concern that these popular beliefs were misleading the community.

“The evidence is just not there in terms of prevention and treatment of cardiovascular disease,” Ms Anderson said.

It turns out that the best sources of

antioxidants - nutrients that are easily absorbed and protect cells from damage by free-radicals (known to cause degenerative diseases and cancers) - are fruit, vegetables, grains, legumes and green or black tea.

Even antioxidant supplements such as vitamins E and C failed to get the Heart Foundation’s tick of approval following the literature review. The findings will be circulated among doctors, nutritionists and other health professionals to pass on to patients.

“We’re concerned about people thinking that in having red wine or dark chocolate that they are actually doing something to treat or prevent cardiovascular disease when the evidence doesn’t support that,” Ms Anderson said.

The review found that while raw cocoa contained high levels of antioxidants, once it was refined for baking, drinking and use in confectionary the antioxidants were lost.

Meanwhile, when it comes to coffee it’s not what is lost but what remains at the point of consumption that has the Heart Foundation s-



peaking out. Coffee contains a naturally occurring oil which raises the “bad” LDL cholesterol. This is removed with paper and metal filtering and in instant coffee, but remains in boiled coffees such as Turkish and Greek-style brews.

“If you make coffee with a plunger or if you’re boiling it on a stove top, then it will still contain the oil and that will raise the LDL cholesterol,” Ms Anderson said. “So for people who consume a few coffees a day, that’s quite important.”

Coffee, chocolate and wine have not been black-listed all together. “Chocolate, coffee and red wine are OK as part of a balanced diet,” she said, along with at least two serves of fruit and five serves of vegetables every day.

Source: The Age

Debt fears put Greek language courses in doubt

A Flinders University professor says it will be very difficult to get Greek language teachers and academics to come to Australia on exchange because of the Greek debt crisis. The Greek government pays for two language teachers and funds courses at the Flinders and Charles Darwin universities. But the growing financial crisis in Greece has forced its government to make drastic budget cuts.

Michael Tsianikas, who helps coordinate both the Darwin and Flinders programs, expects the funding will be cut.

“Without this kind of help it will be very tough - very, very difficult for our programs to function properly in the future,” he said.

“I understand that most of the teachers now will not apply to come to Australia.

“The other thing also is the Greek government [is trying] to save money [and] probably they will reduce or cancel this program regarding teachers abroad.”

Professor Tsianikas is calling on the Greek communities of Darwin and Adelaide to help raise money for the programs.

Article from ABC online