

Δύο ομιλίες στη Βουλή για την Ελληνομάθεια

Οι βουλευτές της έδρας Higgins και Calwell στην Μελβούρνη, κα. KELLY O'DWYER και κα. Μαρία Βαμβακινού αντίστοιχα, ένωσαν τις φωνές τους με τον αγώνα υπέρ της Ελληνομάθειας στις συνεδριάσεις της Ομοσπονδιακής Βουλής την Δευτέρα 21 και την Τρίτη 22 Ιουνίου. Οι κινήσεις αυτές πραγματοποιήθηκαν ύστερα από την ολοκλήρωση του ετησίου συνεδρίου του Αυστραλιανού Ελληνικού Συμβουλίου στην εθνική πρωτεύουσα.

Η κα. O'DWYER μίλησε για την ανάγκη εκμάθησης ξένων γλωσσών στα σχολεία της Αυστραλίας, όπως και η προώθηση πτυχές της Ελληνοαυστραλιανής ιστορίας όπως το Έπος του 1940-41 (η εκστρατεία στην ηπειρωτική Ελλάδα και η Μάχη της Κρήτης). Συγκεκριμένα δήλωσε:

«I rise to speak on the current threat to the diversity of foreign languages in our government schools. The Rudd government is currently considering reducing the number of foreign languages taught in public schools from 12 to eight under its proposed new national curriculum. The teaching of languages at school serves to further enrich students both linguistically and culturally. Learning a foreign language gives students an opportunity to learn about other countries and cultures on a deeper level.

One of the languages that the government is considering abandoning is Modern Greek, a language of great significance to the Western and English-speaking world. Let me state for the record that this is something that I oppose.

The teaching of Modern Greek in our schools currently gives students the opportunity to learn about one of the most important cultures in the world. By learning about the history and language of Greece, students are learning about the development of Western civilisation and the growth of important institutions that remain with us today. Today's modern, enlightened democracies are the beneficiaries of Athenian political and philosophical thought, and our literary heritage has drawn upon the mythologies and great literary and historical works of Greek writers and philosophers. The English language has benefited from Greek influence, with approximately 12 per cent of English words having Greek origin. An understanding of the English language's Greek roots can enhance our knowledge not only of Greek but of English as well.

A history and language curriculum that is well founded in classical antiquity and foreign language is the best education revolution that our children can have. By learning the Greek language, students are accustomed to other cultures, innovations and traditions.

Our national curriculum should also reflect important events in our nation's history. Our friendship and cooperation with Greece and the Greek people were most fully displayed during World War II, when both Australia

and Greece were brought into the war against the imperial ambitions of the Nazi regime in Germany. Next year will mark the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Crete, a landmark event during World War II that saw the end of the German military ascendancy. Australia and Greece have a strong history of friendship and cooperation, and the Greek diaspora is very much a part of my own electorate of Higgins.

It gives me great pleasure and it is a great privilege to represent their concerns today.»

19,607 υπογραφές για την Ελληνική γλώσσα

Η κα. Βαμβακινού παρουσίασε Petition για το Εθνικό Εννιαίο Πρόγραμμα Διδακταίας Υλης (Australian Curriculum) την Δευτέρα το βράδυ.

«I rise tonight to present a petition to the House regarding the inclusion of the Modern Greek language in the national curriculum that is currently being developed by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority.

This petition is significant not only because it is the second bilingual petition to ever be presented to the federal parliament but also because its 19,067 signatures are part of an ongoing nationwide campaign to draw the House's attention to the importance of Modern Greek as a language of cultural, historical and economic importance to the broader Australian community.

The Petitions Committee, of which I am a member, recently approved the petition which I present to the House this evening. This petition also reflects a longstanding passion of mine involving the development and teaching of languages other than English in the Australian teaching curriculum, an issue I first addressed in this parliament in 2005. The truth is that over the years, despite successive government policies on language learning and teaching, we have not really succeeded in reaping the maximum benefits of Australia's existing multilingual resource capabilities.

The languages spoken in this country come from the hundreds of immigrant communities that have settled here and, of course, the many languages and dialects of Indigenous Australians. In my electorate of Calwell alone there are 140 nationalities and 125 languages other than English spoken at home and I am often witness to the benefits and



Μαρία Βαμβακινού

day-to-day functionality of speaking a second language. In fact, the language dynamics of my electorate mirror a wider community feeling that we should see bilingualism and multilingualism as one of our greatest tools for enhancing democracy, cultural awareness, intellectual development, trade and diplomacy.

As a result of this, when developing a languages curriculum I feel we should be mindful not to restrict ourselves by sticking too rigidly to concepts such as community languages and economic languages. We can advance our capacity better if we take a universal approach to the teaching of languages other than English and their relevance to the Australian community must be paramount.

Successful language capability can only be achieved if the languages taught have infrastructure which makes them viable in the long term. They must have a dynamic application and a direct relevance to Australia's domestic and international agenda. As such we need to strike a working balance between the so-called economic languages and the existing community languages. To exclude one group at the expense of the other is to set a path for failure in our long-term development.

The number of signatures gathered for the petition I present this evening are the first of more to come and are a strong indicator that in this case the Modern

Greek language has become not only a relevant working language and resource for the 365,000 people who identify with Greek ancestry but also a linguistic means for future generations of Australians to connect with the global community.

I would like to thank the many thousands of people who have played an integral role in putting this petition and

campaign together. Among the many I would like to thank are the Modern Greek Teachers Association of Victoria, La Trobe University's department of Modern Greek language, and the other Greek departments in schools and universities across Australia. I would also like to thank my colleague the member for Hindmarsh for the incredible amount of work that he has done in relation to this petition. I would like to also acknowledge the assistance of the Greek Orthodox community of Melbourne and Victoria, the World Council of Hellenes Abroad, the Australian Hellenic Council, SBS, 3ZZZ community radio, Neos Kosmos, other media outlets, and community representatives.

In conclusion I want to make special mention of the petition's principal signatory; the deputy editor-in-chief of Australia's largest circulating Greek newspaper Neos Kosmos, Kon Nikopoulos. For more than 30 years Kon Nikopoulos has been a passionate advocate of multicultural issues through the media and the community.

Kon believes, like the many who have signed the petition, that community languages are the hallmark of cultural identity and that they serve as a central point of bringing people together.

The petition to include the Modern Greek language in the national curriculum is also about giving the wider community the choice to get involved and benefit from a culture that forms a large sector of the Australian population. The sheer volume of signatures in this petition is testament to how genuine the community is in giving the Australian nation the opportunity to embark on a journey to experience and learn more about the Greek language and culture. Community languages are, after all, about the journey of sharing with others what is uniquely important and relevant to the multicultural fabric that makes up our nation of Australia.

The petition read as follows:

To the Honourable The Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives

This petition of Certain citizens of Australia including representatives of community, educational, political organisations, institutions and establishments across the country draws to the attention of the House: The matter of the importance of including the Modern Greek language in the National Schools Curriculum as a language of cultural, community, historical and economic importance to Australia and the Australian people.

We therefore ask the House to: Ensure that the Modern Greek language is included in the National Schools Curriculum currently being developed by the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority.

From 19,067 citizens
Petition received.