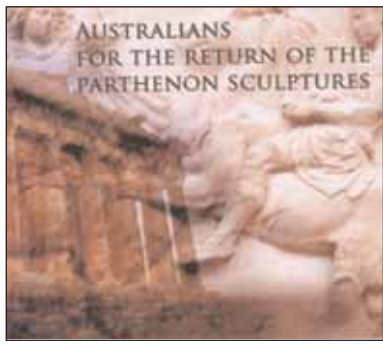


# NSW Premier Kristina Keneally supports the return of the Parthenon Sculptures

The campaign for the return of the Parthenon Sculptures has attracted the enthusiastic support of the NSW Premier Kristina Keneally. On 16 December 2010 the Premier Ms Kristina Keneally, accompanied by the Attorney General, the Hon John Hatzistergos, and the Greek Consul-General, Mr Vasilios Tolios, was on hand at Sydney University at the invitation of Australians for the Return of the Parthenon Sculptures to accept the position of Honorary Member of the committee.



workers engaged by the then British Ambassador to Constantinople, Lord Elgin, began stripping more than one hundred sculptures and significant fragments from the Parthenon for shipment back to Britain. Originally intended for his private collection, Elgin was forced under financial pressure to sell his sculptures to the British Government and in 1816 the Elgin Collection of Parthenon Sculptures, or simply, the Elgin Marbles, went on display as an exhibit at the British Museum where they remain to the present day. The British Museum imperiously maintains that they belong in London where they allegedly tell a different story.

And yet the sculptures that languish in Bloomsbury remain what the author William St Clair has declared to be “masterpieces unsurpassed and unsurpassable, exempt from the contingencies of time, place, and of history”. Even the great Romantic poet John Keats when he first viewed the Elgin Marbles wrote of “awe-struck deference” as he wrestled with the “dim-conceived glories of the brain” and marvelled at the “magnitude” projected by the sculptures.

Premier Keneally was impressed by the marbled immortality of the Parthenon sculptures, as if recalling the question posed by Keats’ sylvan historian in Ode on a Grecian Urn – a poem clearly inspired



by the Parthenon sculptures: “What men or gods are these?”

After viewing the replica sculptures, the Premier was shown a replica of the Acropolis – the Sacred Rock - on display at the Nicholson Museum and was given an overview of the history of the Parthenon and its sculptural and architectural elements. Ms Keneally agreed that the sculptures need to be reunited with the surviving sculptures now exhibited in the New Acropolis Museum in Athens and expressed her unequivocal support for a campaign that has become increasingly vocal and worldwide.

The Premier also took the opportunity to acknowledge the great contribution made by Greek migrants to Australia and remarked how fitting it was that a group of Philhellenes from Australia are committed to the cause of return.

On behalf of all Hellenes and Philhellenes we welcome Premier Kristina Keneally’s foray into the campaign for return.

