

ΕΤΕΡΩΝΥΜΑ

Γράφει ο Κώστας Καραμάρκος → <http://endeaneos.blogspot.com.au>

Australia Day reflections: where is the Greek Australian community heading?

The opening of the Greek Centre for Contemporary Culture by the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria recently, together with the establishment of the Hellenic Museum earlier on, which now cooperates closely with Greece's Benaki Museum, re-emphasises the point that Melbourne is one of the diaspora centres of Hellenism. Which Hellenism though?

One which highlights the competitive advantages of the Greeks, namely important aspects of the Greek culture throughout history.

Aspects of the ever-evolving and multifaceted Greek identity and culture, as they transform through cross-cultural exchanges in Greece, in Australia and in other countries of the world, where citizens of Greek origin live, are highlighted with a consistency worth recognising and praising. A more holistic narrative however, a narrative which attempts to present what constitutes being Greek, Greek Australian or a Greek of the diaspora is yet to emerge. Cultural identities, in many respects, are defined by exclusions. However, it is important I think, at this stage of the life of the community in Australia, to attempt to find out more about the various aspects of our collective and individual selves.

How familiar is the wider Greek Australian community with the literature, the music, the ideas that it produces here in the Antipodes or the Greeks produce in Greece and in other countries? How 'real' is the interest, the ability and the potential of the community to provide targeted support for Modern Greek Studies in Australia's tertiary institutions?

Are we contemplating, are we willing, can we engage in initiatives that will promote an ongoing dialogue with other Greek diasporas around the world and with the people of our country of origin

as well?

Do we realise the importance for all major Greek Australian organisations to be financially independent, so they can have or attempt to have a critical and influential presence in the wider Australian public, by addressing issues of national importance from a Greek Australian and from a migrant Australian perspective?

Do we have a critical mass of people, able and willing to act not only as prominent individual Greek Australians, but as part of a wider collective, in order to propagate wider community needs and interests, for example in social welfare, aged care, or elsewhere? These interests, for obvious political reasons cannot be propagated only by Fronditha or the Greek Australian Welfare society...

Are we willing to rejuvenate the community by reaching out, by encouraging the involvement in our organisations and in 'our' lives of Australian born 'newcomers' from Greece who are capable and willing to be actively involved in our daily affairs?

Do we have an 'outward' looking culture of cooperation, which is confident, generous and willing to engage with other communities in Australia, in order to fight causes that transcend our own heritage? Will the Greek Australian involvement in the wider struggle of successfully opposing the attempted watering down of the Race Discrimination Act be a rule or an exemption in the future?

Do we have media organisations able to inform, educate and expand the parameters of what constitutes community life, by seriously debating and taking up issues of importance to wider audiences?

The answers to these indicative questions will determine to a large extent, I think, the shape and the well-being of the Greek Australian community



in the near and the distant future.

P.S. This article was first published in Neos Kosmos English Edition in September 2014. The building depicted on the photo is the new Greek Centre for Contemporary Culture of the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria.

ΚΑΘΕ ΤΡΙΤΗ, ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΡΑΣΚΕΥΗ

•τηλ.: (02) 9553 6955 •fax: (02) 9553 6944

Ο ΚΟΣΜΟΣ

•e-mail: kosmos@kosmos.com.au

www.kosmos.com.au