

# VALE MR PANAYIOTIS (PETER) THEOPHILOU OAM, A GREEK COMMUNITY FIGUREHEAD IN BANKSTOWN A MEGA LOSS FOR ALL!



**T**he Bankstown and wider district local Greek community, one of the largest non-English Speaking Background communities in the area, is sadly mourning the passing last week of its significant figurehead, Mr Panayiotis (Peter) Theophilou, aged 76. Mr Theophilou was not only a local successful tax agent in the suburb of Greenacre serving the interests of his customers but for many years he was the president of the Greek Orthodox Church-Parish-Community of "St Euphemia", Bankstown, situated between East Terrace and Stacey street, being accredited for his total devotion to the significant growth of the Parish and more importantly for the setting up the Greek Orthodox College of "St Euphemia" from Kindergarten right through to Year 12. The college had grown from its initial steps in 1989 with approximately 30 students to now almost 800-900 students of Greek background and non-Greek backgrounds. In addition, Mr Theophilou was the president of the NSW Inter-Communities Council of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia and was held at a high esteem and regard by his colleague-presidents and various committees of all the 40 plus Greek Orthodox Parish-Communities mostly situated in Sydney and the rest scattered throughout NSW. Mr Theophilou was well loved by all the parishioners. He had arrived as a migrant in 1956 from the area of Lemesos (Limassol) on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus alongside with thousands of other Greek migrants who originated from Cyprus and Greece proper in the 50's, 60's and 70's, some of them making the Bankstown environs their choice for the permanent home. For his great services to the Australian community as an ethnic leader assisting in the advancement of migrant integration and functioning in the Australian society for thousands of Greeks enriching however the cultural and economic tapestry of the adopted new country, he was awarded an Australian medal, the OAM. Simultaneously though, he did not neglect to keep alive his Greek language, culture and heritage as he felt that being at least bilingual, if not multilingual, and bicultural can only be an added advantage for a human being. He was always a person who exercised the right, who supported truthfulness, integrity and justice; it was no wonder that he could not help see the injustices on the island of Cyprus, his homeland, with a foreign occupation on it for more than four decades or the appropriation and monopolisation of the Hellenic culture and history of the largest of regions of Greece, Macedonia in the north of the country by neighboring nations. He had demonstrated great passion in his work from his Office both in his professional affairs and demonstrated passion for his local, municipal and electorate area, cultivating fruitful relationships with the Greek and wider Australian communities. Mr Theophilou is survived by his beloved wife Chrysa and daughter Xanthoula (Cynthia). The service for his funeral will take place on Thursday 19 January 2017 at the Greek Orthodox Church of St Euphemia, in the heart of Bankstown at 11.00am and as expected, the church will be spilling with thousands of people inside and outside onto the streets who will be saying the last goodbye to him, including students, past and present from the College and those who attended the Afternoon Greek Schools which Mr Theophilou served unabated and unrelentingly over the last few decades. A big thank you to him is not enough to express the local community's gratitude for the unassuming work he had achieved for the betterment of all spanning over 30 years and more. His funeral follows the one that was conducted for the late Father Michael Apostolopoulos who died the week before and who served "St Euphemia" and the parishioners for many decades affecting positively the lives of all Greek and non-Greek backgrounds!

**FAREWELL Mr Theophilou! May the Lord rest your soul now in peace!**

**Dimitrios Kametopoulos**

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Modern Greek teacher, Greek Afternoon Schools of the Greek Orthodox Church-Parish-Community of "St Euphemia", Bankstown in the 1980's and 1990's

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