

# Modern Greek in Australia: A Study of the Current Situation and Future Perspectives

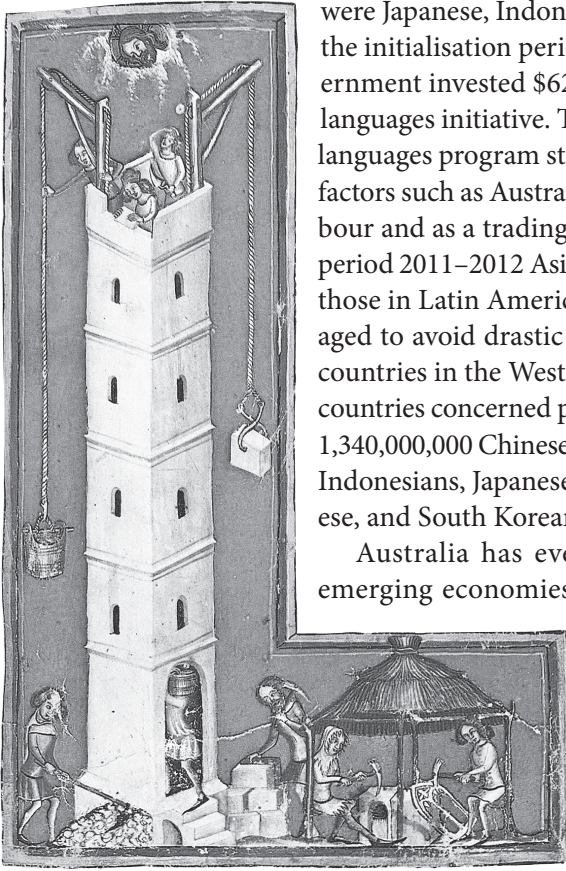
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This study, completed in September 2011, examines the situation of Modern Greek in Australia. After a lengthy research the authors were able to find out the exact number of all Modern Greek students in Australia. The authors, in order to make the study more relevant and place it in the wider Australian context, decided to incorporate information regarding the historical settlement of Greeks in Australia as well as the sociocultural dynamics which are influencing the maintenance and teaching of the Greek language. The findings and the analysis clearly indicate that Modern Greek in Australia will face a lot of challenges in the near future and that it is urgent for all parties concerned to come up with practical strategies if this important language for Australia is to stay alive and well in the antipodes.

## Introduction

The purpose of this study, completed in September 2011, was to determine the status of the Greek language in Australia and to assess its future in Australia. Australia is a multicultural country espousing a strong belief in respect for, and promotion of cultural and linguistic diversity. There is ample evidence of Australia's respect for diversity: over 100 radio stations across the country are broadcast in 100 different languages and there are approximately 100 ethnic newspapers in 40 different languages. Australia invests close to \$15.3 million per year in the promotion and support of language teaching. Statistics reveal that 14% of pupils in their last year of high school (year 12) consistently choose to study languages other than English, including Japanese, Chinese, French, Italian, German, Indonesian, Spanish, Vietnamese and Arabic. Approximately 50% of the entire student population learns a language during their studies (these languages number close to 150 in total) (Fullarton, 2000).

In 2009 the Australian federal Labor government took the initiative of encouraging the teaching and learning of Asian languages. This was introduced through the National Asian Languages and Studies in Schools Program and the languages included



were Japanese, Indonesian, Chinese and Korean. During the initialisation period, 2009–2011, the Australian government invested \$62.4 million (U.S.) in this new Asian languages initiative. The rationale for this national Asian languages program stemmed largely from socio-political factors such as Australia’s links with Asia, both as a neighbour and as a trading partner. It is significant that in the period 2011–2012 Asia’s emerging market economies, and those in Latin America, along with Australia, have managed to avoid drastic economic downturns whilst many countries in the West are in the throes of collapsing. The countries concerned provide stunning population figures: 1,340,000,000 Chinese, 1,210,000,000 Indians, 237,000,000 Indonesians, Japanese 128,000,000, 90,000,000 Vietnamese, and South Koreans, 73,000,000.

Australia has every reason to engage with these emerging economies. It is worth mentioning that the

economic dimension is significant: Australia’s exports currently account for nearly \$211 billion. Of this amount approximately 22% is trade with China, followed by 19% for Japan, 8% for South Korea, 7.5% for India, 5% with the United States and 4% with the

UK. Regarding Greece, Australia’s exports are valued at only \$39 million, a very low 0.0185%, in comparison. Australia’s imports from Greece amount to \$158 million per annum (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2010–2011). In economic terms Greece has had to wrestle with very strong opponents.<sup>1</sup>

To better comprehend the monetary distribution we should, at this point, mention the crucial role played by important factors concerning international students. In the past decade Australia developed a tough economic offensive, to attract international students who were prepared to pay very high tuition fees. On many occasions officials uttered the term “the industry of education”. In 2008, in Australia, there were 294,163 international students (28% of the whole student population in Australia which totalled 1,066,095), an increase of 40% compared to 2003 (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR]. Selected Higher Education Statistics, 2003). The statistics for 2010 revealed an increase in these numbers to a

<sup>1</sup> Hugo and Bakalis contend that we should know more about the trade between Greece and Australia and this should be given greater weight in any discussion of immigration. The explanation given is that in Australia, Greece was given exclusive emphasis in emigration issues, especially with respect to assisting Greek immigrants (Hugo & Bakalis, 2009).

total of 469,619 (ABS, 2010–2011). Universities and schools (both public and private), brought in more and more students from abroad; students who paid handsomely, thereby enabling schools to boost their budgets and support various extra-curricular activities. The funds that came into Australia from international students in this period totalled a phenomenal \$15 billion. This source of income has continued to grow and now represents a third resource of wealth for Australia.<sup>2</sup>

It is not hard to see how “minor” languages like Modern Greek within an aggressive economic environment, may struggle to thrive without support. Many of the thousands representing minority languages groups include pupils/students from the emerging societies of Southeast Asia;<sup>3</sup> students seeking to study in Australia, often motivated by the objective of remaining in the country, after completion of their studies. Such decisions regarding resettlement help change the demographic reality of a country. However, a contrast has always been evident in terms of the Greek element of Australian society, with very few new immigrants having arrived from Greece. Recently, however, the current economic crisis in Greece has influenced the number of Greek students interested in continuing their language studies in Australia.

This unforeseen change has created a need for new strategies regarding how to teach Greek in schools and tertiary institutions. The Greek language now works alongside the increasingly popular major European and Asian languages such as Indonesian, Korean, Vietnamese, Indian and Arabic. Against these languages the Greek language is fluctuating. Yet, despite this changing status, the Greek language remains an important community language that cannot be easily removed from the map of Australia. So what can be done to restore the equilibrium? Let us turn back the clock in search of an answer to this question, undertaking an evaluation of the history of Greek migration to Australia. Such an evaluative study will help us understand the place of the Greek language in Australia’s identity.

## The Greek presence in Australia

The year 2012 completed 60 years of a formally signed agreement between Greece and DEME (Intergovernmental Immigration from Europe), allowing the subsidised immigration of Greeks to Australia (Palaktsoglou, 2011). However, it should be noted that despite this liaison there was never a formally signed immigration agreement between the two countries and this oversight was to have considerable repercussions.

<sup>2</sup> In 2010, there were more than 469,619 students in senior-tertiary studies, with approximately 227,000 enrolled in universities, 146,000 in professional colleges, and circa 24,000 to 31,000, enrolled in schools for learning English. In the exact same period 2010 international students arrived in Australia to take up studies. The following numbers of international students arrived: from China: 126,313; from India: 68,758; from Korea: 25,900; from Malaysia: 21,451; from Vietnam: 18,920.

<sup>3</sup> As in all cases, statistics are subject to interpretation. Accordingly Bob Birrell and T. Fred Smith, for example, in their study “Expert earnings from the overseas student industry: how much?” note: “It is not Australia’s third largest export industry. Perhaps it is the sixth largest, after the export of iron ore, coal, gold, petroleum products and tourism services” (Birrell and Smith, 2010:12).

The presence of Greeks in Australia began in the early 19th century (1829) with the forced “displacement” of seven sailors (Gilchrist, 1992:25–37), at a time when the British were still sending convicts to Australia. The number of Greeks in Australia during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century was quite small and their social situation was very difficult. Many Greek immigrants had to survive by changing jobs on a regular basis or by moving to find jobs in the major cities in Australia, often lost in the endless lengths of travelling required.<sup>4</sup> The statistics recorded for this early Greek settlement in Australia are provided in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Greek Immigrants to Australia

Year	No. of Greek Immigrants
1871	305
1881	515
1891	736
1901	977
1911	1,833
1921	3,664
1933	8,338
1947	12,292

Source: Gilchrist, 1998:508–511.

From 1947 to 1983 more than 250,000 Greek settlers immigrated to Australia (Jupp, 1988:516). At this point it is necessary to note that during the Second World War, military cooperation between Greece and the Allies was intense.<sup>5</sup> This heroic struggle, whilst moving, has never, in the view of the authors, been sufficiently recognised by either country. Such recognition in the 1950s may have dramatically helped increase the acceptance given to new immigrants from Europe. Instead, the Greek settlers were often treated as second and third class immigrants and this continued for several years.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> There are few recorded cases of the exploitation that occurred. George Tachmintzis, a medical student in Sydney, in 1916, wrote to Greece’s King Constantine (Fifis, 2009a:13): “The Greeks here can be divided into three groups: workers, the rich and those who lead the community. [...] The rich are taking advantage of the situation; enrich themselves with the injustices to the poor”.

<sup>5</sup> This collaboration was seen as heroic and the mutual respect bonded the two groups together. In 2010, Maria Hill wrote of the mutual esteem as follows: “There is no doubt that the Australians were accorded a hero’s welcome upon their arrival to Greece: ... right through we were greeted with shouts of Austrooloos, Kali nikta (good night), Kalimera (good morning) and niki (victory),” wrote Sergeant Robertson of I Australian Corps headquarters. The Greek people lined the streets of Athens throwing flowers cheering, ‘Zeeto e Australia’ (Long live Australia)” (Hill, 2010:127).

<sup>6</sup> As noted in their book, *Servitude and Freedom*, Toula Nikolacopoulos and George Vassilacopoulos

This situation surfaced in the area of education. According to the reflections of a Greek resident from the Riverland, in a 2001 interview, the difficulties experienced during these years were very real:

We started school in Renmark North, in 1944, after [the beginning of] the war. There were 60 of us Greek kids in the school. The cruel teacher took matters out of our hands and pulled us out, in front of the school, to introduce us to the other students. He said, ‘These guys are enemies.’ All together they mocked us and called us ‘Joey’. [...] We were afraid, ashamed. It was the worst time for us. They kicked us in the head with stones. They drove us away, they chased us, to steal our bikes; we could not endure it.

Such events left a deep impression because, unlike the First World War when Greece entered that conflict in 1916, Greece immediately entered the Second World War on the side of the Allies.<sup>7</sup> Yet ethnic prejudice continued in Australia and in particular in the Riverland schools. The efforts of Greek immigrants in the Riverland during the war years, for example, were genuine and in some quarters highly praised, such as by Mr Pergam in the local press.<sup>8</sup> In the light of such events the later camaraderie between Greeks and Australians, in relation to the Cretan military campaign experience, was valued greatly, but may have perhaps come a little belatedly.

After the Second World War, Australia changed its immigration policy from accepting only British migrants, and decided to accept more immigrants from southern Europe, mainly from Greece and Italy. Political action in Australia, following the dramatic events of a costly world war, reflected a heightened understanding of the need for security; this in turn led to a focus on increasing Australia’s population and

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comment on the Greek immigrants and social changes in mainstream Australians’ prejudices during the White Australia Policy: “Their admiration [British Australians] ... for the Greek people, and their fascination for the Greeks of Australia, who supported the war mobilization, proved to be retained (the miniscule effect) of a pebble thrown into a pool of water. In a very short time the stagnant waters of white conscience regained their original self satisfied and arrogant serenity” (200–201).

<sup>7</sup> “Around the middle of 1915, unruly elements in several of Australia’s cities began to indulge their chauvinist sentiments by attacking the shops of foreigners, including those of Greeks. In these episodes, soldiers on leave from training camps, sometimes the worse for liquor, played a prominent part, usually aided by hooligan civilian youth. In Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart little or no violence against Greek shops was reported. In Brisbane, Newcastle and Sydney, however, a number of Greek shops were damaged, and in Perth, Kalgoorlie and Boulder many were wrecked and looted in mob violence” (Gilchrist, 1997:19).

<sup>8</sup> In 1940, the local Riverland press comments on the Greeks were flattering. We read, for example, in the *The Murray Pioneer* (Thursday, 15 August 1940), in an article titled “Loyalty of the ‘Greek Community’”: “The loyalty of the Greek Community throughout Australia to the Empire’s cause was stressed by Mr. N. Pergam, of the Minerva Pharmacy when interviewed this week. A deep student of international affairs, Mr. Pergam, as a member of the Greek Community in Adelaide, keeps in close touch with the doings of his people, the majority of whom are naturalized or natural born Australians. All told, said Mr. Pergam, the ‘community’ in Australia numbers some 25,000 persons, and he considered that there were as many as 200 to 300 living in the Upper Murray areas. These folk, he asserted, were unquestionably loyal to the country of their adoption, and their willingness to contribute towards Australia’s war effort was demonstrated in a contribution of 1,740 pounds to the Red Cross”.

resulted in a massive influx of immigrants. This new policy would be upgraded further in 1973–74, through the elimination of the official “White Australia” policy which had been in place since its inception in 1901. Within a few decades, following these political changes, the population of Australia doubled and the country developed economically as a result of the population boom. In the pre-war period Australia had sought mainly young male immigrants. The 1960s witnessed a change in policy that was oriented more towards a family model.<sup>9</sup>

By 1971 there were 160,200 people of Greek descent in Australia and some smaller numbers of ethnic Greeks from Cyprus and Egypt. According to Kringas the “period from 1947 to 1983 was to see close to 250,000 Greeks had settled in Australia” (1988:518). In one year alone, 1964–65, 17,000 Greek immigrants arrived. Most of the post-war immigrants came mainly from Peloponnese, Epirus, Macedonia, Crete and Lesvos while the pre-war generation were natives of Ithaca, Kythira and Kastelorizo. The largest number of these immigrants settled in Victoria (49.6%), followed by New South Wales with 31.7%. Most of these pre-war immigrants arrived in Australia without special skills and this meant that many had to wander far and wide in search of work. There were many immigrants who were illiterate. The statistics provided below in Table 2 indicate the number of Greek-born immigrants to Australia in the period 1971–2006:

Table 2: Greek-born in Australia

Census Year	Greek-born in Australia
1971	160,200
1981	146,625
1991	136,331
2001	116,431
2006	109,989
2011	99,937

<sup>9</sup> So many young men who arrived in Australia recruited relatives and friends from Greece to send them the coveted “bride”. The story of the “Bride” is another fascinating one that many Greeks lived: the letters, the waiting, the photos, the first contacts and “the dance of Isaiah” (Nazou, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). In reality some of these brides received a rude shock about the reality of their situation, as attested by one wife in the Riverland (Tsiannikas, 2009): “I came in 1950. [...] We arrived at the house, big house, went inside, I found 13 individuals. Ah! where I left my home and came! I wanted to leave, to call my dad to go back. Where is the telephone? I remember I had gone to a farm next to my house and there was a horse. I was hugging the horse and cried. The neighbour told my husband about the wife crying all day hugging the horse. Eventually we bought this farm. I got married after three months”.

Table 3: 2006 Census of Population and Housing, Australia — Ancestry by Country of Birth of Parents

	Both parents born overseas	Father only born overseas	Mother only born overseas	Both parents born in Australia	Country of birth not stated(b)	Total Responses(c)
Greek	235,140	35,798	14,137	71,203	8,869	365,147

Table 4: 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Australia – Ancestry by Birthplace of Parents

	Both parents born overseas	Father only born overseas	Mother only born overseas	Both parents born in Australia	Birthplace not stated(b)	Total responses(c)
Greek	225,293	38,138	16,311	90,392	8,131	378,265

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to working in factories, agricultural pursuits and fisheries, Greek immigrants enriched Australia with other micro-economic pursuits. Chief amongst these was the domestic industry concerning cuisine. Greek cuisine brought a great “cultural” change to the normally “Ango-Saxon” Australian lifestyle. Small gourmet shops and new types of patisserie cafés were established Australia-wide. A great deal of this widespread cultural enrichment has been documented in important studies done by Leonard Janiszewski and Effy Alexakis (2003, 2004, 2011). As noted in Table 2, in 2006 only 109,989 people claimed to be of Greek-born immigrants to Australia,<sup>11</sup> given that the first generation is now progressively disappearing from the statistical maps. During this period many migrants returned to Greece. In 2001, for example, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs stated that approximately 135,000 Australian citizens were living in Greece. However, with the

<sup>10</sup> Greek Ancestry/Origin: The 2006 Census indicated that there were 365,147 people of Greek origin in Australia, as shown in Table 3. Table 4 shows that there were 378,265 people with Greek ancestry according to the 2011 Census, which represented an overall 3.59% increase. In comparison to statistics for Greek-born, those for people of Greek origin, naturally, have been steadily increasing.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics do not always reflect the reality and they need interpretation. In some cases it is impossible to find what the real numbers are. For example, regarding the numbers of Greek-Cypriots in Australia, according to 2006 Australian Census, there were 10,721 people of Cypriot ancestry. According to the 2011 Census data, there were 22,681, a bigger than expected number.

current economic crisis in Greece, those who returned are looking forward to coming back to Australia.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics for 2006, 95.3% of Greeks who emigrated from Greece to Australia were Orthodox Christians. It is indeed impossible for one to study the historic settlement of Greeks in Australia, without including the view of the church. The churches were, and still are, a major attraction for the Greeks; one of their first concerns, from the beginning, was to acquire/build Orthodox churches and to organise courses in Greek language with the assistance of the church. The first Orthodox priests arrived in Sydney and Melbourne from Jerusalem in 1898–99 and the first Orthodox church of the Holy Trinity was built in Sydney in 1898. In Melbourne in 1901, “Evangelismos” — the first Orthodox Church there — was opened. In 1924 (after the 1922 Asia Minor Disaster), the Greek Orthodox Church of Australia was placed under the direct auspices of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and as a consequence the Archdiocese of Australia and New Zealand (with the centre based in Sydney) was created. In 1970, however, the New Zealand branch detached itself from the Archdiocese of Australia and created the Archdiocese of New Zealand (including islands of the Southern Pacific and South-East Pacific).

Along with the above institutions, a number of other key community groups (some of which predate the Archdiocese) and various Associations, Organisations and Brotherhoods assisted the Greek population in Australia. Some of these communities were independent, while others belonged to the parish community (and therefore were closely related to a church). Over 1,000 such large institutions retained Hellenism and its associated practices in the Antipodes organised and united (with major changes in unification strategies occurring after 1950).<sup>12</sup> However, gradually many of these institutions declined with the exception of those in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, which have remained strong to this day.

In addition to the important part played by the Church in Greek life in Australia, various clubs and football clubs had a very crucial role (Genesee, 2008). A typical pattern of Greek settlement in Australia was marked by cluster settlements in chosen areas characterised firstly, with a Church, followed by a school to encourage teaching the Greek language and equally important a local football team to represent the community in the sports arena. One other very important inclusion was the Greek love of music, which was typified by the establishment of several orchestras. Orchestras and the Hellenic passion for music have been a part of the Greek cultural identity from the first to the fourth generations in Australia. These cultural influences play a very key part in their cultural identity. Indeed the bond with the *bouzouki* appears to be everlasting. Finally, the Greek community gives much importance to rejoicing in the arts with various festivals that have proved to be very popular in the wider “mainstream” society; hence the popularity of Hellenic cultural events and feasts in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Darwin, and various “Demetria” festivals. At these

<sup>12</sup> In pre-war Australia there were approximately 35 fraternities (Allimonos, 2002).



celebrations, all generations and thousands of Australians from a number of cultures have fun and come in contact with what is generally considered the “Greek way of life”.

What is offered by the various organisations, mentioned briefly here, continues to enrich Hellenic life in Australia to this day and is also reflected in social welfare. “Hellenic” institutions, for example, provide “Greek” nursing homes for the elders, in close collaboration with federal and states governments. Caring for the aged people from CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Divers) perspective will continue to flourish in Australia as a central core value and it is an important form of assistance for the elderly from Greek descent in particular who often return to using their mother tongue and find themselves “lost in translation”.

Complementary to the above picture are two other important factors that are related to the much-valued literary presence of Greeks in Australia. Ever since the first Greek language periodical publication was issued on June 6, 1913 in Melbourne (Kanarakis, 2000:25), many periodicals have followed in its wake (Fifis, 2007). In his study, Kyriakos Amanatidis (2009) identified over 25 magazines that began circulating in Australia after 1916. Kanarakis (2000) noted that the most read publications to date have been the *Greek-Australian Review* (Ελληνοαυστραλιανή Επιθεώρηση 1951–1953), *Antipodes* (1974), and the *Chronicle* (1979–1991). However, even though few of these printed periodicals are available today, some widely read electronic periodicals have replaced them. Amongst these is the *Anagnostis* and *Agora* in Melbourne. This literature has consolidated the presence of Hellenism in Australia. Newspapers published today in Australia, such as the *Greek Herald* (in Sydney) and the *Neos Cosmos* (Melbourne) have adopted the strategy of using English in some of their publications so as to reach a wider audience such as the second and third generations, given that the first generation is no longer the sole audience (Tamis, 2001). Supplements that have engaged the first generation include radio broadcasts and Greek television channels, both of which are receiving high ratings.

Greek literature in Australia incorporates a large amount of rich editorial material. Some of the first Greek immigrants wrote poetry, prose or drama in Greek and published copies using the Greek printing press. Through a simple means of expression they lamented their nostalgia for Greece but also their hopes for life in the new country in which they had settled. Some of these important materials have been published by G. Kanarakis in his anthology *The Literary Presence of the Greeks in Australia* (1985) and *Literary Aspects of Greeks in Australia and New Zealand* (2003). Similarly, many immigrant children began writing their memoirs and thoughts in English and many of them are now recognised as important writers in Australia. Let us mention here the very well-known Christos Tsiolkas, whose work is acclaimed by many in Australia for revealing aspects of complex debates about suburban life that invite us to ponder and reflect at a deep, engaging level (Tsiانikas, 2007; Vardoulakis, 2004; Authers, 2005). Similarly, from the first generation we notice that Greek Australian writers such as Dimitris Tsaloumas (who wrote in both Greek and English), Antigone Kefalas, Tony Maniatis (they write in English) and Stylianos Charkianakis

(writes in Greek) are very significant examples. An interesting feature is that women's voices have become more distinct in Greek-Australian literature over the last thirty to forty years (Hawke, 2010; Nickas, 1992; Tsefala, 2011; Herodotou, 2009; Dounis, 2009).

## Multiculturalism / Multilingualism

It is necessary to now discuss the demise of the White Australia policy in favour of a policy of multiculturalism. There is important literature available on this subject (Castles, 1993; Jamrozik et al, 1995). The authors of this study believe that an understanding of multiculturalism in Australia will help us to grasp more fully the evolution of the Greek language in Australia. The multiculturalism rhetoric emerged as a keystone of Labor Party policy in the early 1970s and one that was influenced by the Canadian model. In 1973 the Labor Party Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, took the initiative and offered his immediate support for multiculturalism. Malcolm Fraser continued the multicultural agenda throughout his Prime Ministership (1975–1983); Bob Hawke (1983–1991) and Paul Keating (1991–1996) carried the policy forward thereafter. Certainly, there have been many positive and important changes during the 34 years that now separate us from the origins of the multicultural policy in 1973.

The word multiculturalism today has a direct meaning for almost all politicians<sup>13</sup> and all governments; it is never referenced in a merely rhetorical manner. The policy has been a green light for Australia to “adopt” immigrants and strive for integration in all areas of society. Indeed, Australia's multicultural policy has changed the experiences of Greek immigrants in an extremely positive way. Greeks in Australia can now enjoy being part of a community in which all cultures are valued and respected. Their lives are in stark contrast to fellow Greeks who chose to settle in Germany, for example, where it is very hard to become part of the main stream society.

Australia, because of its policy of multiculturalism, sought to offer a range of languages and provide quality support for language teaching. Interestingly, before 1975, Australia was happily Anglophone. Apart from learning Latin, Ancient Greek, German and French at school, any other choices of “foreign” languages sounded odd. The year 1976, for example, marked the very first time that the National Statistical Office had ever sought information about which languages were spoken at home. Such moves initiated the introduction of learning programs for languages other than English and of course Greek was one of them. At the bureaucratic level people of non-Anglo-Saxon origin made their way into key bureaucratic positions. This also marked the period when many politicians from a non-English speaking background were elected to represent their communities.

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<sup>13</sup> Occasionally, the language could be confrontational over a political point: “South Australian Leader of the Opposition Isobel Redmond called Minister Tom Koutsantonis rude after he spoke to the President of Cyprus in Greek at an official function in Adelaide last month, according to Minister Koutsantonis” (Pappas, 2011a).

Multiculturalism led to the development of new policy guidelines on languages and many school programs for teaching the Greek language in schools throughout Australia. In the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s different languages were taught in Australia and the rhetoric of governments, especially when elections had to be fought, always promoted strong arguments for maintaining and teaching languages and cultures other than English. However, from the early 1990s onward, in a period that focused on economic policy and cost-benefit approaches, Australian bureaucrats put a stronger emphasis on Asia and Asian languages (Lo Bianco, 2009). Indeed, in 1994 the Keating government greatly favoured Asia and its growing “tiger economies”. In the first decade of the 21st century, the enthusiastic rhetoric regarding the teaching of languages, and Asian languages in particular, continued, although this was not backed up by very strong practical measures and/or investment options. Accordingly, national interest in languages declined somewhat. Even the recent celebrations of the new “measures” promised by the current federal Labor government (and some state governments) for languages (including Greek) seem to represent an approach that is high on rhetoric but low on substance and action shots (Baldwin, 2011).

## Is there a Greek-Australian identity?

There have been several studies on the historical presence and historical institutional organisation of Greeks in Australia, but what has been missing, so far, is a spotlight on systematic and in-depth studies that relate to individuals and/or the collective emergence of Greek-Australian subjects as a given hybrid society (Kalantzis, 1993). This is also very important for comprehending the situation of Modern Greek in Australia in the long-term. A focus of interest would be a structured research project that explored the historical relationships between first, second, third and fourth generations of Greek-Australians. This would allow us to “predict” and perhaps determine the future of the Greek language and culture in Australia. Examples of research efforts to better understand this “grey” area of “traditional” and “sifting” identities could include studies by: Isaacs (1975, 1981); Bottomley (1975, 1979); Tsolidis (1985); Rosenthal (1989); Athanasou (1989); Vassilacopoulos and Nicolacopoulos (2003–2004); Petrou (2005). Vrasidas Karalis (2009) has stressed that the “Greek-Australian” subject in many cases developed offensive mechanisms and not enough cultural interaction with the wider Australian society. According to Karalis, “The ‘other’ must experience openness that invites them to participate in social engagement whilst simultaneously retaining an existential autonomy” (2009:610).

In most cases the “grey” area of social engagement/disengagement is exposed in the area of Arts, such as literature, painting, theatre and cinematography. It is these spaces that capture the *living reality*, which *occurs* beyond the statistical data and the official history. Let us then mention, as purely indicative samples, three important Greek names in the Arts who have met the challenges of the wider social context. The first is Katherine Kizilos, author of *The Olive Grove* (1997). This book

recounts the author's travels in Greece, and her memorable visit to her father's village. She experiences revelations of the past, through a Homeric procedure of "recognition" of landscapes and people, and all of this brings unexpected serenity to her life and reconciliation with her father. The second author is Christos Tsiolkas, who through his writing shares with us his challenging obsession with uncovering the *darker* aspects of a particular social set in the wider context. In his acclaimed book *The Slap* (2008), which proved to be a very successful TV series, he achieves this uncovering by exposing the *gap* that exists in some social practices; this revelation emerges easily through the eyes of a thoughtful observer, in *The Slap*. When asked in a recent interview whether this incident in *The Slap* was based on a real life experience, Tsiolkas replied:

Yes. It was very similar to the first chapter of the book. My parents held a barbecue for their friends and family, my brother and my partner. My mother was cooking and there was a three-year-old boy who was playing around her. He was basically not listening, he was going into cupboards and taking all the pans out, my mother very lightly tapped him on the bottom and he turned around, put his hands on his hips and said: 'No one has the right to touch my body without my permission.' There was no violence in what my mother had done but it was the kind of incomprehension in that boy's face and the incomprehension on my mother's face that felt so vivid to me. I wrote the book to try and work out the gap between those two looks. (Day, 2011:3)

The third example comes from the well-known author, Nikos Giannopoulos, famous for his theatrical production *Wogs Out of Work*, a work that reveals the mechanisms of *defence* and *counterattack* in human confrontations. Giannopoulos was born in Melbourne in 1963; his parents were Greek immigrants who had arrived in Australia in 1960. His early childhood experiences were those of a child growing up in Australia, and they left such vivid memories for him that they informed most of the context of his artistic career:

'We were angry at everyone,' he says. 'Angry at being called wogs. Angry at our mothers being made fun of. Angry we couldn't get Australian girlfriends — they were all after surfer guys. Angry that the Big M milk ads only had blond-haired, blue-eyed guys on them — that the media in general was not acknowledging the true state of what Australia was.' (Only Melbourne, 2013:2)

*Wogs Out of Work*, ran from 1987 to 1990 to packed houses and received huge accolades. From 1989 to 1992 his work received further acclaim with the hit TV series, *Acropolis Now*.

## The immigration generation and the Third Age

In 2009, statistics showed that in Australia there were 127,195 people born in Greece. The same statistics also stated that the average age of the Greeks born in their home country was 61 years (the majority had passed into what is known as the "third age"),

while new communities, such as the Chinese, Vietnamese, and Indian are now as dynamic as the Greeks were during the decade 1970–1980. This change in communities alone can create new situations in a society and certainly did in Australia. As population growth and changes in geopolitical conditions took shape, the Greek language entered a new critical phase. Australia, like all developed countries, has its share of an ageing population and this is often due to low childbearing on the one hand and because people are living much longer.<sup>14</sup> Such a trend in Australia has brought with it some dramatic implications for the generation of post-1960 immigrants, as the first generation has now well passed the age of 60. The main outcome has been a multiple and immediate effect on the way in which community languages have been influenced.

If we focus on the Greek language as an example, we know that with the first generation, Greek was spoken in the home and so the children grew up speaking Greek. This same generation also influenced the children of the second generation, since in many cases the grandparents cared for the children while their parents went to work. However, the parents of the second generation reduced this extended family contact and the third generation reduced it even further. Clearly, there are situations in which first generation grandfathers and grandmothers are still living and their grandchildren are forced to communicate with them in Greek. However, this course of events ceases automatically when the grandparents die. As a consequence the number of students or young people learning Modern Greek could be affected dramatically in the near future. This is why the authors of this paper argue for a more strategic and comprehensive approach from all parties concerned, including governments and departments of education, to come up with a viable solution. Australia and its communities must find ways to support the most valuable and “natural” asset of society: the vast and rich range of cultural resources that are just as important as the mining sector, which is now dominating all political discourse.

Greek nursing homes in Australia have bloomed and demand for them will continue in the years to come. These havens present a need for first language maintenance when caring for the elderly and those in the third age. There is considerable need for first language maintenance across government (especially state and local) departments and communities (families, parishes, clubs, etc.) so that social problems can be faced and overcome by the elderly, who have, at this stage in life, withdrawn into their first language and are no longer able to communicate easily in English. The elderly try hard to participate in unfamiliar programs but they often retreat into silence from sheer

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<sup>14</sup> The statistics tell us that of the 17.8 million Australians in 1996, 3,389,962 belonged to the second generation and 1,169,205 of them had at least one parent born outside Australia. Of these 153,876 were Greeks (Khoo et al, 2002). From 1999 to 2009 almost one million immigrants acquired Australian citizenship (i.e. more than 20% of the population). The statistics for 2006 tells us that 73% of Australia's population were not born in Australia; also, after 2 years of residence in this country, most immigrants are sickening and obtaining the Australian citizenship.

loneliness. According to a recent research,<sup>15</sup> one elderly person with tears in his eyes, said, “I expect every day the Australian postman to hear from his mouth the word ‘kalimera’ [good morning]”. The message seems clear that the first generation will be threatened even more unless their language is preserved as an important bridge not only in communication but in keeping their culture alive.

However, in the context of a deepening European and especially Greek economic crisis and Australia advertising thousands of positions for migrants (108,000 for 2011),<sup>16</sup> it is possible that a new influx of Greek migrants to Australia will occur. The daily press here in Australia and in Greece has provided frequent reports of those seeking to come to Australia<sup>17</sup> and there were many cases where people were deeply disappointed.<sup>18</sup> It was also reported, on May 18, 2011 in the *Greek Reporter* that a delegation of the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne met with the Minister of Immigration, Chris Bowen, to persuade him of the need to expedite the process for those wishing to migrate to Australia from Greece (Anastasia Miskedaki, 2011).<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> When this research team began working at Flinders University in 2009 under the auspices of the Department of Modern Greek Studies and the Southgate Institute, it became clear that the people of Greek descent who were in the Third Age (Tsiannikas, 2011; Newman, 2011) had several needs: a) linguistic communication because they experienced huge barriers and needed help with translation; b) even when texts were translated into Greek, the elderly Greeks did not necessarily understand the “language” and required much explanation; c) the staff collecting the data required “training” to work with the elderly when discussing issues with which the interviewees were not familiar, especially issues concerning the Australian lifestyle; d) the elderly often needed assistance with lifestyle management; e) the pressures exerted on families (especially women) were huge and understanding of their hardships was important; and f) it was important to ensure that the voice of the elderly was encouraged and heard — being a good listener was an essential skill for interviewers to have.

<sup>16</sup> “Australia is a beautiful, multicultural country, with an excellent health care, quality of life, human development, public education, economic freedom, and protection of civil liberties and political rights. [...] If you wish to immigrate to a new country, to start a new life, to live and work in one of the most beautiful countries in the world — Australia is the answer for you. Now it is easier than ever”.

<sup>17</sup> When the financial crisis erupted in Greece, thousands of people wanted to leave the country and emigrate to Australia (Penni Pappas, 2011): “Hundreds of Greek professionals desperate to emigrate attended the Athens skills expo last weekend in a bid to find out what Australia has to offer”. The author further stated that “more than 700 people crowded together at the Hilton Hotel in Athens, the weekend of 8–9 October 2011, to participate in the program / report called the *Skills Australia Needs expo* organized by the Australian Industrial Systems Institute (AISI) under the auspices of the Australian Government’s Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC)”. The reporter also noted that around 10,000 people had expressed their desire to participate in this process. The report was attended by the Governments of Victoria and South Australia and organisations such as WA Health and Aged Care.

<sup>18</sup> An incident was reported in an article in *Kathimerini* (24 August 2011) because many believed that Australia could receive migrants from Greece by thousands. The Greek-Australian spokesperson stated that: “They have cheated us”. Jenny Bloomfield, the Australian Ambassador to Greece, responded to this outburst: “This program is for prospective migrants from all over the world without discrimination. There are no special arrangements for Greece or any other country”.

<sup>19</sup> The following announcement was made: “A meeting between the Federal Immigration Minister of Australia, Chris Bowen, and a delegation from the Board of the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria, will be held to discuss the issue of migration from Greece”.

As a result of:

- the Greek language is moving away from the first generation and becoming a “second” or “foreign” language in Australia, which is affecting school curricula;
- there will be a negative impact on students enrolments;
- over the next 20 years or so, the Greek language is going to be very important for the ageing first generation (living at home or in nursing homes) and there will be a social necessity to keep the language alive; and
- new arrivals from Greece and their children will need Greek programs for cultural and educational purposes.

## The Greek language in Australia

The 2006 statistics indicate that of the 365,147 people of Greek descent in Australia, 252,226 used Greek as the medium of communication at home. The Greek language ranks fourth after English (15,581,313), Chinese (465,153), and Italian (316,895).<sup>20</sup> It can be assumed that from the time Greek citizens set foot in Australia, great pains were taken to organise communities that took responsibility for ensuring Greek people could practise their religion and maintain the learning of their first language, Greek.<sup>21</sup> However, for many decades, Greek was taught under very difficult conditions, given Australia’s unwillingness to promote community languages before 1973. There are thousands of examples of immigrants who protested publicly because they could not speak English and yet were denied their first language. Events changed radically after 1973 and gradually, as we have seen, at least officially, speaking another language was regarded as an important qualification. The year 1973 is certainly one in which immigrants arrived in Australia in their thousands and Greeks were well represented among them.

As mentioned earlier, Greek communities organised associations, communities, churches, and other social groups. One of the chief concerns was to organise the learning of Greek. In the beginning they created the first community schools, followed by

<sup>20</sup> Australia’s linguistic diversity and the respective situations of each language often create grounds for a political lobby to emerge. For example, according to the 2006 census, the languages spoken in the home are: Arabic: 243,662, Vietnamese: 194,863, Spanish: 98,001, Filipino: 92,331, German: 75,634, Slave-Macedonian: 67,835, Turkish: 53,857, Serbian: 52,534, French: 43,216. From this data the conclusion may be drawn that European languages have receded in Australia (German: 23.5%, Italian: 7.15%, Greek: 6.5%) whereas Asian languages have increased (i.e. Mandarin: 138.9%, Vietnamese: 33.2%, Arabic: 37.2%).

<sup>21</sup> In a recent study we conducted in the Riverland in South Australia the following observation was recorded in the data: “It became clear that the teaching of Modern Greek marched hand in hand with the presence of orthodox priests and the establishment of orthodox churches and Greek communities. [...] Greek students from Public schools and Ethnic Schools paraded with the Greek flag and welcomed by the local community and the official representatives with great solemnity” (Tsianikas, 2011:708).

day colleges for their children to attend. The character of Greek language programs varied. Below is a comprehensive listing of the types of schooling that eventuated.

Table 3: Type of Programs

Type of Education	Description
Public Schools	Schools where the Greek program is taught formally in a state school, as with all other disciplines, i.e. it was included in the formal institutional system of the country which is why the role of government is so important. The teachers are civil servants. The teaching of Greek is now facing tremendous challenges in the state school system.
Independent Schools (Colleges)	Schools with a predominantly Greek character (most are under the auspices of the Archdiocese) and could be classified as private (if parents pay for the tuition). The learning of Greek is usually compulsory, at least to Years 9 and 10. It is needless to emphasise here the importance of these schools and the challenges they face in an increasingly competitive education system in Australia.
Afternoon/ Saturday Schools	These include the so-called Saturday schools. These schools teach Greek one afternoon a week (after the normal school day, usually for 2 hours) or on Saturday mornings (usually for about three hours). These schools are subject to a parish, community, or a private/or non-private organisation. Parents pay a nominal amount but these programs are supported by the local governments. Community afternoon schools were a huge issue for the Greeks of the diaspora; they played a key role in their commencement of the teaching of Greek. Afternoon/ Saturday schools will survive long after the closing of other government education programs. These afternoon schools can be very robust and effective, if there is an appropriate approach to managing them. Research and publications highlighted the importance and of course the challenges they have faced (Tsounis, 1974; Arvanitis, 2003/2004; Fifis, 2011).

Greek-Australians fought to have Greek recognised as an official language of Australia. Eventually, in 1991, the Greek language was included as one of Australia's 14 priority languages. It was a period in Australian history when languages were gaining more and more ground. And yet, as happens every so often in Australia, in 2010, there came a time of reckoning; in this instance it involved the need for decisions to be



made regarding what subjects would constitute the National Curriculum. It ushered in a time when the Greek population in Australia needed to recognise that choices made in difficult times carried no guarantees regarding the languages chosen in the National Curriculum.

## Teaching staff

The biggest problem facing the teaching of languages in Australia, apart from the limited teaching time for languages in most schools, is the lack of teachers and most importantly world class trained teachers. It is affecting the teaching of Modern Greek. In a survey conducted in March 2010 by the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), it emerged that the level of language programs that were cut from the education system due to the lack of suitably qualified teachers was 66.2%, followed by programs in music (with 19.2%), while other programs had corresponding cuts below 10%. Specifically, the study stated: “LOTE was by far and away the most common area in both primary and secondary schools to be affected by the lack of qualified teaching staff” (p. 4). In addition, 30% of schools in Australia responded to the survey as follows:

Table 4: Lack of qualified teachers

Percentage	Problems
68.3%	revealed that they were experiencing problems with the teaching of community languages in primary schooling.
30.3%	revealed that teachers of languages were generally not qualified.
45.1%	revealed that they were experiencing problems with the teaching of community languages in secondary schooling; indeed 24.3% of the secondary school languages teachers were completely unqualified to teach.
34.5%	reported that they could generally not offer the last three years of their languages programs because they lacked teachers with adequate training.
66.2%	gave unskilled teachers as the main reason for ceasing to offer languages in their schools.

This dramatic situation could possibly worsen with time but there has been encouraging evidence in Victoria that this is not strictly the case. According to the official statistics of the Department of Education in Victoria, 57% of the state’s language teachers are fully qualified and this percentage represents 41.2% in primary and 67% in secondary schools. In addition, 65% have attended relevant professional development courses in linguistic methodology (Literacy volunteers of Greater Syracuse, LVGS, 2010:27). Teachers of Greek in Australian can be differentiated between two major categories:

the Greek-Australian born and those who have been seconded by the Greek government. The first category is more numerous but while some Greek-Australian-born teachers are professionally trained, many are not. The professionally trained have completed a university level degree in linguistics and language pedagogy, mostly in Australia, with a few having qualified in Greece or Cyprus. The number of teachers completing their professional studies in Australian universities is increasing. A number of these qualified teachers who have studied in an Australian educational institution are graduates of Colleges of Advanced Education. These institutions were founded in 1967 and operated until the early 1990s until they merged with nearby universities or became universities themselves. These colleges offered very good pedagogical and methodological training in their role of preparing teachers. However, by the mid-1990s all those who wanted to study teaching attended a university and completed at least 4 to 5 years of study.

For many professional educators who have completed their studies in Australian educational institutions and teach Greek but are not of Greek origin, there have been problems with managing the written language and maintaining fluency in spoken Greek. Given that writing is a compulsory part of the Greek curriculum and many students are fluent speakers of Greek given also that many speak it in the home environment, the teachers in question are often at odds in terms of their ability to communicate fluently in written and spoken Greek. Such a gap in their skills has created a problematic situation. Furthermore, although most graduates are from pedagogical institutes, their preferred methodology for teaching the Greek language favours an English language teaching approach that is not commensurate with the pedagogical approach required to teach Greek effectively. Similar issues are evident in the case of professional educators and teachers who have finished their professional studies in Greece or another foreign country. Although this group is a gradually declining population, their presence is still a reality. Teachers in this group are not lacking in language training and are native speakers of Greek. However, they are not necessarily familiar with the Australian teaching context that includes SACSA and SACE, as a South Australian example, and now the new Australian Curriculum.

With respect to non-professionally trained teachers of Greek, they have tended to work mostly in ethnic schools or with the Saturday community and the Church schools. The seconded teachers from Greece represent the final category of teachers of Greek. These teachers are appointed by the Greek government to serve in various foreign countries, and usually have a posting of 3 to 5 years. Consecutive Greek governments supported and expanded a very costly and, in some cases, politically motivated scheme to support an educational “investment abroad”.<sup>22</sup> Up until the 2009–10 school year, seconded teachers made a significant contribution to the teaching of Greek in

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<sup>22</sup> Many thousands of Greek teachers in this way were seconded around the globe. We argue that this “investment”, in most cases, constituted a waste of resources. In Australia only a few studies have researched the outcomes of this “investment” approach to teacher supply (see Evangelinou-Yiannakis, 2005, 2011; Milidis, 2009).

Australia, not only in schools but also in universities and in the offices of the Greek Consulate. However, due to the recent economic crisis in Greece it is expected that the number of seconded teachers from Greece will fall dramatically over the coming years and probably disappear from the Greek education system in Australia and elsewhere. In August 2011 Australian politicians of Greek origin visited Greece and exchanged views with their Greek counterparts on the issue of seconded teachers. A tabled discussion raised the view that perhaps a “rich country” like Australia would not require support from Greece in these troubled times. John Pantazopoulos, a Victorian MP, had this to say on the topic: “We cannot have private schools in Australia, where parents pay tuition fees, and then expect taxpayers in Greece to support the teaching of Greek in Australia” (Mike Sweet, “MPs call to end Greek funded language teaching”, *Neos Kosmos*, 28 August 2011).

## Parents and Greek language education

The role of family with respect to delivery and maintenance of the Greek language has been well researched (Bottomley, 1988; Smolicz, 1988; Holeva, 2004; Papademetre and Routoulas, 2001; Garivaldis, 2009; Damanakis, 2001; Tamis, 2001). Most of the literature highlights the strong role that family has played in fostering Greek identity with a particular focus on the maintenance of the first language. In the beginning, language maintenance was straightforward for the first generation because Greek was the only language spoken in the home. Maintenance was even further boosted in this period in situations where the grandparents lived in the same dwelling. Moreover, the extended family and the social environment also favoured the exclusive use of Greek and thus virtually all children born to first generation immigrants used Greek with relative ease.

The “Greek family” in Australia, has been built around traditions, customs, cuisine, religion and language. For the most part, Greek society in Australia has been structured mainly around the family and this has been the case in 87% of households (Victorian Government’s Vision for Languages Education, 2011). However, over time, this percentage has declined, giving way to increases in *de facto* relationships. Religion has perhaps been the one link that offered resistance to the rising tide of competing views that debated the most effective ways to manage the maintenance of Hellenism in Australia.<sup>23</sup>

With the third and fourth generations came very distinct changes. For example, the percentages relating to the number of Greeks marrying Greeks changed dramatically with 62% of men and 56% of women of Greek descent willing to marry a person of

<sup>23</sup> It should be stated that, in general, Orthodox Christians represent a small minority of Australia’s population, approximately 2.5% (and a lot fewer are Greek Christians). This percentage is preceded by Anglicans who represent 35% of the population, followed by Roman Catholics who represent about 25%. Anglicans and Catholics have maintained this supremacy since 1901, while the percentage for Orthodox Christians did not rise noticeably until after the Second World War.

another nationality (Kyriakopoulou-Baltatzi, 2009:656). Potentially this move would signify children from mixed marriages moving away from their Greek heritage. However, according to Kyriakopoulou-Baltatzi (2009:655), 24.5% of the pupils attending Greek school Australia-wide were from transnational marriages.

In most homes the second/third generation favoured the use of English despite the waning influence of grandparents and uncles/aunts and relatives. This trend has been accelerating, as too, the frequency of mixed marriages. Progress in social and economic matters has influenced second generation Greeks and they have moved away from the cluster settlement favoured by the first generation. This change of lifestyle has had a profound influence on cultural and social ties and over time, these changes have impacted on choices influencing the role of the home language. Furthermore, attitudes that have opened the doors to inclusivity in the broader social context of Australian society now exist. This cultural “gap” has continued to widen in the fourth generation, i.e. the grandchildren of the second generation.

Meanwhile, “veterans” of the first generation (65– 80+ year olds) still play an important role in the use of Greek as a means of communicating with their grandchildren and great grandchildren.<sup>24</sup> These children are experiencing the Greek language and culture as part of their identity, through their grandparents.<sup>25</sup> Some of the first generation immigrants, who arrived in Australia before the Second World War, may cling to their language and their Greek way of life as important parts of their identity. However, due to their wartime life experiences they are less successful in passing on this heritage to the younger generations of Greek children.

## The struggle for recognition in teaching Greek

The ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) entered into wider consultations in a bid for languages to be recognised as “national priorities” and as such an important part of the education system. A debate ensued on this issue. There was uncertainty about the number of languages that would be included. One suggestion that circulated suggested there would be 8 languages and Greek would not be one of them. This news aroused a great uproar in Australia’s Greek community. There were many meetings, consultations and committees and further meetings with politicians. Many Australian politicians, mostly of Greek origin, issued press releases

<sup>24</sup> We recently heard of an educated grandfather with very good English who pretended he could not speak English and so was forced to speak Greek. This situation was true for someone who had married a partner of Greek origin. A second Greek person married someone who was not of Greek origin, where the grandfather spoke to the grandchildren in English.

<sup>25</sup> A typical example is the famous Greek-Australian writer Christos Tsiolkas. His parents are both Greeks who migrated to Australia after the war. At home they spoke Greek, and Christos did not know any English until he went to school. Christos recalls that, “for a long time, until I was nearly thirty, I felt within me the romance of Greece. When I visited Greece I loved it, I was overjoyed, but I never felt truly at home. I left with the thought that I was not Greek, I was Australian”.

and at the same time, within the Greek community signatures were collected, the number of which surpassed 25,000 (Victorian Government's Vision for Languages Education, 2011). In some cases individuals or groups expressed emotional differences as to how to handle such an important issue amongst the Greeks of Australia.

In 2011 ACARA released an extensive document (ACARA 2011) containing recommendations for the recognition of language teaching in Australia. The request was for this recognition to evolve progressively, in three stages.<sup>26</sup> The final proposal regarding the number of languages was set at 11. It was a "proposal" requiring social dialogue before its submission in a finalised form. A few months later this socio-political mobilisation brought results but also some surprises. The number of "official" languages would not be 11 but 14; a definite confirmation of the multicultural "sensitivity" that exists in Australia. The proposed number of 14 included Greek. Indeed, an official announcement on the 22nd November 2011 stated clearly that the Greek language would be included in the Australian curriculum. The announcement also reported that:

- the new curriculum for schools would look favourably on languages;
- all Australian students in primary and secondary education would have the right to learn another language as well as English; and
- the Australian curriculum also put forward a suggestion for school children to receive 350 hours of language teaching, but the Department of Education in Victoria suggested that this number should be increased to 700 hours (i.e. 150 minutes a week).

Many believe, however, that the push for extra time for learning a language is a very ambitious project that could well prove difficult to realise. Already in N.S.W. the Department of Education has put forward a request for all primary school children to receive two hours a week for language learning. Yet the two hours, they say, will create structural problems in the general program of instruction and most importantly, it cannot be done, simply because there are not enough teachers to teach the languages.

Victoria has promised much for the future of teaching languages (Victorian Government's Vision for Languages Education, 2011). According to the statistics below, they show how languages in Victoria have not fared very well in its state schools. An important goal was to put in place a commitment to remedy this situation.

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<sup>26</sup> First stage: Chinese, Italian (as the most popular languages). Second stage: French, German, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Spanish (also popular languages and especially Indonesian, Japanese and Korean as national preferences and. Spanish due to its global importance). Third stage: Arabic, Modern Greek, Vietnamese (as the most commonly spoken languages in Australian society, with Arabic valued, in particular, as an important language). One sees the decline of Greek in "Community" languages, with little recognition given to the enduring importance of Greece in the development of Western civilization (ACARA, 2001:35).

Table 5: Drop of Languages support in Victoria

Year	Action
Example No. 1	
1999	100% of the municipalities offered a language and 97% of them offered languages in secondary schools.
2010	The percentage dropped to 86.6% and 69.3% respectively
Example No. 2	
1999	88.7% of pupils of primary schools and 54.2% of secondary schools learnt a language
2010	Rates fell to 69.4% and 41.1% respectively.

In order to reverse this situation the Victorian government is committed to making the “National Plan for Languages” a success, despite the possibility of some “inevitable setbacks”.<sup>27</sup> To successfully implement and achieve its goals, the government will need to rely on a social partnership and employ new technologies. Those in charge of overseeing the successful teaching of Greek will need to be committed to these goals and be a productive part of the social partnership.

On the topic of languages in general in Australia, some of the federal government’s plans have begun to take shape. Two languages, Italian and Chinese, will be trialled in 2012. The choice of these languages was the result of a long process and took into account the participation of the wider community,<sup>28</sup> through discussions and postings from key stakeholders. However, the decision to include Greek in the Australian Curriculum must not be taken lightly by the Greek communities. Indeed, Greek communities in Australia must work together to ensure the success and maintenance of important Greek language learning programs in the Australian Curriculum. Social partnerships must be at the very centre of successful outcomes,<sup>29</sup> if we do not wish to

<sup>27</sup> To achieve this ambitious plan, the government must rely on the following “principles”: participation, quality, diversity, partnership (The VGVLE: 7).

<sup>28</sup> The statistics show that of the total number of 2,150 submissions, there were surprisingly only 59 such positions/requests from Greeks in Australia, 258 from the French, 245 from the Spanish, 204 from the Italians, about 162 from the Germans, from the Koreans 83, from the Indonesians 80, and 31 from the Arabic groups. Turkish was included amongst the 14 chosen language as a consequence of social pressure. An analysis of the responses from the stakeholders revealed that all who responded spoke another language, with 73% of this number being speakers of Turkish. Australia has a special motivation to promote a positive attitude toward Turkey; in the first instance, because of the events at Gallipoli in 1915 and because currently Turkey is recognised as an emerging economic power with a vast population and a great deal of geopolitical potential.

<sup>29</sup> In our interview with *New World* in Melbourne, it was stressed that: “the decision to include Modern Greek in any given school’s curriculum rested solely on the principal. [...] Professor Tsianikas feels that the decline in the Greek language in Australian society and the rise of Asian languages, such as Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Indian, Japanese and Vietnamese, adds to the logic used by principals when choosing a language for their school” (Penni Pappas, “A Pyrrhic victory for Modern Greek”, 2011b).

repeat as a consolation the phrase of Horace: “Si fractus illabatur orbis, impavidum ferient ruinae” (if the world should break in pieces around him, the ruins would leave him undaunted).

## **The number of pupils who learn Greek in Australia (2010)**

Accurately identifying the number of Greek students represents a challenge.<sup>30</sup> To this we add the fact that statistical information has varied from state to state, and there has not been a national approach regarding statistical matters in education. For this reason, after recording the numbers state by state, based on the information we received, we decided to include comments from each sector (public, independent, ethnic), in order to widen our understanding of what is going on: quite an interesting picture will emerge but still we need a more comprehensive and systematic analysis, if we want to “visualise” the situation and make sure that we are making the right assessments for the near future. A number of other important queries, however, may well remain unanswered, for example:

- for how long the education departments and other institutions will continue to accept small numbers of enrolment in languages, including Modern Greek?
- how does this level of acceptance vary from one state to another and to what degree is this for reasons related to the quality teacher supply quotient?
- how many students enrolled in the independent schools (Colleges) are learning Greek?
- how many students from not Greek background are learning Modern Greek and where?
- how many students learn Greek through private tutors? and
- how many children who live outside the metropolitan centres would like to learn Greek online?

The following statistics provide some insight into the widespread exposure of students to the Greek language.

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<sup>30</sup> In several cases and after some persistent effort, figures were revised downwards. There are cases, however, where even the official ministerial statistics may be wrong. This is very important because these statistics may take into account the different “bureaucrats” who formulate political strategies. When, for example, we looked at the official Statistical Bulletin of the Ministry of Education in New South Wales — *School and Students in New South Wales, 2010* — we noted that in 2010 for year 10 there were only 16 entries for Greek; this low figure prompted us to study the document further. It took considerable effort to uncover that “the actual number was 73” and that “by mistake, the numbers had been given to Latin”.

Table 6: Number of schools, type of schools and number of students

States	Public	Students	Independent	Students	Ethnic	Students	Total
Victoria	27	4,636	4	1,798	41	7,069	13,503
NSW		5,383	3	1,994	63	2,445	9,834
SA	22	4,289	2	648	15	1,389	6,326
WA			1	455	4	390	845
QLD	1	164			6	464	628
Tasmania					1	16	16
NT	6	267			1	180	447
Canberra					1	78	78
TOTAL	56	14,739	10	4,895	132	12,031	31,675

## Discussion of the data

The figures provided confirm that the student populations represent an interesting numeric distribution. For example, there are more Greeks living in Victoria than anywhere else in Australia, and consequently, there is a reasonably large contingent of students of the Greek language. Yet a cursory check (people from Greek background versus number of students) reveals that in South Australia the percentage of students is more than double that of Victoria and Sydney. Also, despite the Western Australian population being smaller than that of Queensland, Perth operates one independent college that teaches Greek and has more students.

### *Ethnic schools*

**In South Australia:** the Ethnic schools Board published an online report, *Ethnic Schools Board Annual Report 2009/2010*. This report provides detailed numeric data from 2002 to 2010 and documents that 1,389 students attended afternoon/Saturday classes. The statistics for 2010 also provide information concerning the number of students studying Greek in the Riverland, 250 km north-east of Adelaide. The Riverland has 2 schools, one in Renmark with 64 students and one in Berri with 29 students where Greek is taught. The statistics also indicated that in 2007, the local government subsidized all state schools with \$614,136 but in 2010, this fell to \$549,328.

**In Victoria:** for the same period no relevant documentation was found but when we asked the question in relation to the statistics, we received the following information: Greek is taught in 41 schools and there is a total of 7,069 students studying Greek: Kindergarten: 745. Elementary from first to sixth respectively: 885, 951, 753, 757, 629, 575. High School respectively (7 to 12): 393, 407, 331, 231, 230, 182.<sup>31</sup> These

<sup>31</sup> Here we notice the number 182 for the year 12, a staggering number compared with the other States.



students represent 496 teachers who have qualified: High School: 108, Grade from Greece-Cyprus: 105, High School from Greece-Cyprus: 27, Unqualified: 110, 153 of them attended training seminars.

**In NSW:** the total number of students studying Greek in 2010 was 2,445. Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain a breakdown of these numbers.

**In Queensland:** the statistics revealed that schools offered 6 Greek elementary levels to 338 children and only 4 to 76 children at high school level. The Greek settlement pattern in Brisbane was very widespread so that the numbers of children studying Greek per class/year level, we encountered, was small. For example at a school run by the Parish-Community “The Dormition of our Lady” in Brisbane, we were told that all children completed 12 years of Greek studies, from the first to the last grade of high school. The total school enrolment was 67 and classes ranged from 2 to 15 students with 7 teachers on staff.

**In Canberra:** there was only one school that offered Greek until year 10. It was a challenge to offer Greek classes. Class times had to be flexible and changed each week. There were 3 primary teachers from Greece and 3 unqualified teachers of Greek.

**In Western Australia:** a number of educational institutions offered learning in the Greek language: The Centre for Hellenic Studies, with 108 students in elementary, 23 in High School and 30 adults. The Greek Orthodox Parish of St. Constantine and Helen: 90 Primary and 35 Secondary School students. The Greek Orthodox Community of the Annunciation Parish with 65 in primary and 15 in high school. The Greek Orthodox Church of Pantokrator with 25 at the grammar school.

**In Darwin:** lessons in Greek were only offered in the afternoon and these were under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Community. Numbers attending were as follows: 172 children at the elementary/primary level 8 children in 7th grade. Children wishing to study Greek until Year 12 did so at a public school.

**In Tasmania:** lessons were only offered in the afternoon at the Holy Trinity school. There were only 16 children in the elementary/primary levels who studied Greek at this school.

Other general comments:

1. In Victoria there are 7,069 students and 496 teachers in 41 schools (average 172 students per school) and in NSW 2,445 students and 99 teachers in 63 schools (average 39 students per school).
2. Falling numbers in general: In South Australia, for example, according to the official data of the Ethnic School Board, in ethnic schools the number of students in 2002 was 1,666, and this declined in 2010 to 1,389 students, i.e. a reduction of 19%.

3. However, ethnic schools in Australia remained a major attraction for students and local governments. In 2011, for example, the Victorian government announced it would invest, over the following year, \$16.3 million for the teaching of ethnic languages. This means that for every child who attended such a program, the school received \$190 per year (an increase of \$70 compared to 2010).

### ***Public schools***

**In Victoria:** The 2010 statistics of the Department of Education in Victoria show that the total number of children studying Greek was 4,636: 3,316 elementary and 1,320 in secondary schools. In 2005 the total number of children studying Greek was 4,695. This means that for the period 2005–2010 the records remained almost the same.

Other general comments:

1. A comparison with other languages' numbers at the elementary level in Victoria were as follows for 2010: 55,783 Italian, 43,183 Japanese, 39,049 Indonesian, 14,292 Chinese (Mandarin), 18,969 French, 13,987 German, 10,722 Auslan, 6,374 Other Languages.
2. However, a decline followed and this was experienced in all states. Firstly, numbers in languages generally fell: Italian from 97,044 to 74,421; Japanese from 76,484 to 62,221; French from 41,344 to 39,474; German from 37,3225 to 26,287; Indonesian from 91,896 to 56,057; and yet Chinese increased from 14,848 to 22,460. For Greek, the relative decline in numbers occurred in the 11th and 12th year levels, moving from 86 to 55 students (in 2008–2010, the numbers had been between 132–134). The corresponding figures for other languages were: Turkish 136 to 129; Chinese 1,191 to 1,364; French 535 to 549; Italian 220 to 235; and Vietnamese 400 to 371.
3. The lack of sufficient time set aside for learning was a common indicator of decline. In fact the time available for pupils in primary school to learn a language varies dramatically, depending on the type of program and infrastructure of the school. This time starts from 10 minutes and goes up to 360 minutes per week, averaging 56.2 minutes per week (not including bilingual programs where the language is taught from 420 to 685 minutes per week). Besides the bilingual programs, only 2.1% of language programs are taught for at least 150 minutes per week, recommended by the Curriculum Planning Guidelines as the minimum for a language (LVGS, 2010:23).
4. Concern over the plummeting numbers from the elementary/primary years to Year 12 levels indicated another reason for the declining numbers. The widespread concern in all languages areas was reflected in the following statement: "92% of students study a language in the seventh year, but only

17% of the study continue their language study in Year 10 and only 8% carry language study through to years 11 and 12” (Discussion Paper, 2010:7).

**In NSW:** according to the statistics sent to us by the Department of Education a total number of 4,303 children were studying Modern Greek in primary school. These numbers, however, plummeted in high school to 1,082.

Other general comments:

1. It was evident that during early and primary years of schooling, circa 84,642 children learnt another language as well as English. The breakdown showed that this included: 4,303 Greek, 18,259 Chinese, 18,738 Italian, 6,015 Vietnamese, 7,464 French, 9322 Arabic, 4,195 Japanese, 3362 Indonesian, and 928 German. These numbers, however, plummeted in high school from 4,303 students to 1,082 for Greek. In the tenth year there were only 16 children studying Greek,<sup>32</sup> 517 Italian, 1,419 English, 406 German, 2,121 Japanese. In year eleven there were 70 students in Greek (22 beginners and 48 advanced) whilst in other languages there were: Italian 371, French 1,190, German 165, Japanese 1,338. In Year 12 there were 85 students in Greek (Beginners 23, Continuers 38, Extension 15). For other languages the figures were as follows: French 913, Italian 241, Japanese 1,147, German 281. No figures were available for Chinese. It was noted that there were only 2 students studying Ancient Greek and Latin 48.<sup>33</sup>
2. Another statistic that caught our attention was that in NSW all children enrolled in the system and those from linguistic backgrounds other than English totalled 220,837, with 9,148 of Greek origin, i.e. 4.1% of the student population. A large number of these, almost 50% (4,303 students) were in Greek Elementary but didn't continue afterwards. They were followed by the Chinese with 18%, Arabic 12.9%, Vietnamese 6.7%, Indian 3.9%, Korean 3.3%, Spanish 2.9%, and Italian 2.8%.

**In South Australia:** according to the official data, in 2005 there were 4,820 children learning Modern Greek in primary school and 859 in secondary school. In 2010 there

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<sup>32</sup> Ultimately, this should not be the case (see previous footnote).

<sup>33</sup> Regarding entrance examinations to universities (which directly affect 11th and 12th year students), until recently, they had to choose 5 subjects. The fifth course was the chosen language. Now it has been decided to only have 4 subjects and this decision has had dire consequences with respect to the teaching of languages in senior classes in high school. Recently, in December 2011, *The Advocate*, published by the *Modern Language Teachers' Association of South Australia*, noted: “[...] we are witnessing the slow but sure decline in SACE enrolments in languages across all sectors. An increasing number of schools that have for years offered solid language programs in the senior years or even at year 10 level, both in the public and private sectors, will not be offering Stage 2 or even Stage 1 language (s) in 2012”.

were 3,685 and 604 in primary and high school, respectively. Clearly, numbers had declined in secondary education and there was a corresponding decline in teacher numbers and schools. In 2007 there were 54 teachers of Greek and by 2010 this number had fallen to 45. Finally, in 2007 there were 22 primary and 9 high schools teaching Modern Greek while, 3 years later, in 2010 there were 16 and 6, a clear decline of programs. Year 12 was quite problematic in that 25 years ago students in this class numbered more than 200. Now this number has dropped to 24 and this decline will continue.<sup>34</sup>

**In the Northern Territory:** initially and unrepentantly the Department of Education wrote to the authors and stated that “very little Greek is taught in the public system of the Northern Territory, although there are opportunities, there is little interest from the students”. After further investigation we were informed of the actual number: 267 students. Specifically, 233 children attended primary and 34 attended secondary school/high school. There was only one teacher paid by the Northern Territory’s education department and teachers sent by the Greek government taught all other programs. This needs more investigation, because, if these numbers are correct, then it is evident that these programs are vulnerable in spite of the strong Greek presence in Darwin.

**In Canberra:** a representative of the relevant government department (Curriculum Executive Officer Languages & Asia Literacy) sent the authors of this study the following statement: “Greek is now not taught at any state school or in Catholic or Independent schools. The ACT Education and Training Directorate support the teaching of the following 8 languages: Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, French, German, Italian and Spanish. Greek is not listed in the 8 priority languages. However, we support all the ‘community languages’ through the ACT Community Language Schools Association”. Let us note here that the 2006 statistics (NBS) reported 2,583 people of Greek descent living in the region.

**In Queensland:** there was only one school (Brisbane High School) offering Greek in Years 8 and 9, with 16 and 18 students respectively. In years 11 and 12 the number were: entries 8 and 5 respectively. A teacher for all children was available for 3.5 hours a week.

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<sup>34</sup> The principal of St. George College in Adelaide noted that it opened its doors to international students in 2006. In 2010 the college signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the International College of Chinese Studies, Shanghai Normal University, the Zhejiang Jinhua No. 2 Secondary School in Jinhua and the Adelaide Institute of Business and Technology. As a result, Chinese was studied by year 6 and 7 students at St George College from 2010, while students from China studied Greek. Similar international cooperation occurred in Alphington Grammar (Melbourne), where we read: “Becoming an international student at Alphington Grammar School is highly regarded by families of graduates throughout Asia”. Looking closely at the numbers we saw in the relevant school, the number of international students was around 30–33, and this number grew in years 10, 11 and 12 to circa 60.

### *Independent schools (Greek colleges)*

It should be noted that the majority of children attending these schools study Greek, but there are cases where this is not so, especially with the senior high school classes. It would be wrong to include all students of all colleges in the numbers of children who are learning Greek. Anthi Baltatzi completed a study (2009) “Greek Orthodox religious education in Greek Australian Colleges” based on interviews and questionnaires (67 teachers, 126 parents and 293 students in 2005). The objective was to determine the student population of these schools, the vast majority of whom were of Greek origin, i.e. 98%. With regard to the reasons for sending children to these colleges, parents and teachers believed that they offered the following:

- academic education and career options;
- safe surroundings;
- lecon in the Orthodox faith;
- excellent Greek language lessons; and
- assistance to students to develop.

They also highlighted the importance of partnership and the shared Greek ethos, culture, traditions and orthodox religion (Kyriakopoulou-Baltatzi, 2009). Out of 9 independent colleges, 8 operate under the auspices of the Greek Archdiocese of Australia. One college, Alphington Grammar, Victoria, operates under the auspices of the Greek Community of Melbourne. Regarding the number of enrolments for these schools the numbers are as follows.

Table 7: Independent Schools

School	Elementary	High School
St George College, SA	311	217
St Spyridon College, SA	60	
St Spyridon College, NSW	415	235
St Euphemia College, NSW	339	335
All Saints Greek Orthodox Grammar School, NSW	350	320
St John’s Greek Orthodox College, Victoria	220	220
Oakleigh Orthodox College of St Anargiri, Victoria	500	340
Alphington Grammar School, Victoria	268 (of which 79 in Kindergarten and preschool)	250
St Andrew Grammar School, WA	305 (63 kindergarten)	150

Overall, the schools under the auspices of the Archdiocese seemed to do better in NSW, i.e. 3 schools with a total student number, which is 1,994. In Melbourne there were 2 schools with 1,280 pupils. We can safely assume that the majority of these students come from families with at least one parent of Greek origin. The same may apply to other programs (state-afternoon), with the exception of several elementary schools, where the language was compulsory and children received a minimum of teaching hours per year. Perhaps this is a challenge for all programs to multiply their numbers and perhaps even attract international students.

## Universities

There is no doubt that in recent years Modern Greek Studies have experienced challenges in Australia and it is becoming clear that in order to survive they need to adopt special strategies and support at the tertiary level. In 2004, John Hajek and Nick Nicholas in their article “The Rise and Fall of Modern Greek in Australia’s Universities: What Can a Quantitative Analysis Tell Us?” argued why, in a relatively short period of 35 years, Modern Greek Studies had flourished and then retreated from Australian universities. This happened at a time when Australian universities were trying to rebuild to meet the “capitalist” demands of our times.<sup>35</sup> The first programs began in the 1970s and 1980, but by the 1990 the situation had changed rapidly and a number of programs disappeared or faced elimination. This is the current situation state by state:

### *Victoria*

- Melbourne University: started in 1974, closed 1997. From 1978 it offered Greek to La Trobe and from 1982 to Monash University students (Memorandum of Understanding for the teaching of languages).
- Monash: started in 1982, closed in 1997 (offered by Melbourne University until 1992). Independent from 1993–1997.
- La Trobe: started in 1978 (offered at the beginning by Melbourne University) and continues today. In 1982 La Trobe started appointing its own staff and became completely independent in 1987. In 1997 when EKEME (National Centre for Greek Studies) was established there the University also initiated the Dardalis Chair for the Greek Studies Program with Stathis Gauntlett as the first Professor. A new memorandum of understanding for the teaching of languages was signed between Melbourne and La Trobe Universities but now the situation was reversed: La Trobe offered Greek to Melbourne University students (and Spanish) while Melbourne University offered French and German to La Trobe; that memorandum ended in 2008. EKEME was established at La

<sup>35</sup> How will the Greek language flourish in Melbourne without a vibrant Greek program in higher education; a program from whence we will produce teachers of Greek in a city where 13,505 students studying Greek at all levels of schooling?

Trobe in 1997 and closed in 2008, leaving behind a chaotic past with thousands of irreplaceable archives rotting in some “buildings”. The consequences of the collapse of the National Centre hovered like a heavy shadow over Greek language programs in Australia.<sup>36</sup> In December 2009 Chris Mackie was appointed as Professor of Greek and Director of the new Greek Centre at La Trobe in the area of classical studies.

- RMIT (Royal Institute of Technology): started 1992, closed 2000. This Modern Greek program started at Philip Institute of Technology in 1986 which then amalgamated with RMIT in 1992, when Greek studies was seconded to RMIT until 2000. Since 2000 RMIT has offered some language subjects but not a full program (taught with the support of teachers from Greece through the Greek Consul for Education). RMIT founded in 1989 the Hellenic Australian Archives but this initiative mysteriously collapsed in 2000.
- Deakin: started 1977, closed 1987. Previously, Prahran College, Toorak College and Rusden College amalgamated and became Victoria College in 1980. In 1985 Victoria College was amalgamated with Deakin University. Greek was offered at Prahran and Toorak colleges, then at Victoria College and finally at Deakin.
- VUT (Victoria University of Technology): began 1985, closed 1997. Greek started at Footscray Institute of Technology, which was amalgamated with Victoria University.

In Melbourne, the “third largest Greek city, after Athens and Thessalonica” there is currently only one institution, La Trobe, offering a full program in Modern Greek and this is taught by only one lecturer.<sup>37</sup>

### ***New South Wales***

- University of New England: began in 1968 and closed in 2001. The first university where a Greek Program was introduced in an Australian university.
- University of Sydney: began 1972 when the Chair of Modern Greek Program was established at the University of Sydney after a generous donation from a Kytherian migrant, Sir Nicholas Laurantus and currently offers a full program in Modern Greek taught by 3 full-time members of staff.

<sup>36</sup> “(EKEME) was set up as an independent entity. Establishment and recurrent costs are funded through large donations [...]. Segregation is a ticket to oblivion” (Zangalis, 2009:77).

<sup>37</sup> In the *Neos Kosmos* in Melbourne (21 November 2011), an article announced that: “the Greek Department at La Trobe would be closed down”. Five days later it stated that there was an “Uncertain future for Greek at La Trobe”. On 20/11/2011 the same newspaper reported: “In a counter attack past students of the Greek Studies Program at the University of La Trobe, have written protest statements and forwarded them to Professor, Chris Mackie [...]”.

- The University of Macquarie: started in 1988 after receiving financial aid worth \$375,000 from the “Greek Studies Foundation”, established to support the program. At the moment there is one member of staff.
- The University of New South Wales: began in 1989–1990 after receiving \$250,000 from the Greek Orthodox Community of Sydney and the “Hellenic Society”, established to support the program. This program in recent years has had problems surviving.

### ***Canberra***

- Modern Greek was introduced in 2001 via the Australian National University, firstly run in outreach mode by the University of Sydney and then Macquarie University. The program was terminated in 2005.

### ***South Australia and Northern Territory***

- Flinders University: began in 1987. The first Modern Greek Program in Adelaide was established in 1970 at the Adelaide College of Advanced Education, which later was amalgamated with the University of Adelaide. The Modern Greek program at Flinders was inaugurated in 1989. Modern Greek is now offered through the Modern Greek program at Flinders to students of Adelaide University and the University of South Australia. In 2011, after a significant financial injection of \$600,000 by the South Australian government, LOGOS — The Hellenic Centre for Greek Language and Culture — was established at Flinders. In 1997 a Biennial Conference on Greek Research was established and the refereed proceedings of the conference are published every two years. There are currently 3 members of staff at Flinders University.
- Darwin: since 2005 a full Modern Greek program has been taught at Charles Darwin University, delivered entirely through Flinders University.

### ***Western Australia***

- University of Notre Dame: began in 1999. There is only one program at the private University of Notre Dame with only one member of staff, a teacher from Greece, appointed there through the Greek Consul of Education. The first Modern Greek program was established at the University of Western Australia in 1980, but over a short period of time the program lacked sufficient enrolments and therefore stopped.

There are only two institutions with more than one member of staff (Sydney and Flinders) and one program surviving with one seconded teacher from Greece (Notre Dame). The number of permanent staff in all Modern Greek programs in Australia is only 7 (one professor, one associate professor, one senior lecturer and four lecturers)



and they teach Greek to students of all levels;<sup>38</sup> the number of university students does not exceed 400.

Only one university position for Greek language studies was created in the last 10 years in Australia (at Flinders University), when so many lecturers have lost their positions. It has proved very difficult, if not impossible, to replace those who retire. There is also no serious succession plan and it has been very difficult for such programs to develop impressive performances in terms of research.<sup>39</sup> A systematic analysis of the number of students per class and comparing them with other languages would make interesting conclusions. Greek managed to keep solid numbers from the first to the third year, while other languages' numbers dropped considerably after the first year records.

Finally, two more important issues should be noted. Firstly, the average tuition in languages in Australian universities corresponded to 4 hours per week, i.e. about 100 hours a year. This is not enough time for someone to consolidate a language course and it is completely impossible to prepare teachers who might be able to teach the language later. The consequences have manifested themselves in a lack of competent teachers of languages other than English in Australia. Most lecturers in Greek are required to participate in departmental teaching; whilst this is not bad in itself, it limits their ability to devote themselves exclusively to the subject of Modern Greek and to conduct research.

There are two international conferences organised every two years: one by the Modern Greek Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand, and the other by the Department of Modern Greek Studies, Flinders University. The Modern Greek Studies Association (founded in 1990) publishes its own magazine (*Modern Greek Studies, Australia New Zealand. A Journal for Greek Letters*) and the Biennial Conference at Flinders University publishes a volume of the Proceedings of the conference, which are also available online. Generally speaking, the number of books and articles on Modern Greek remain relatively few, something that could have a greater impact on Australian academia generally or indeed for a global audience.<sup>40</sup> No significant grant has been won by any Greek program in Australia. With regard to the development of research centres, as suggested previously, there were two attempts in Melbourne

<sup>38</sup> It would be useful here to make some comparisons with other language programs in Australia. At the University of Sydney, for example, in the French Department, 10 permanent teachers and as many assistants were informed that 10 more university positions would be created for French Departments, in 2011, in other Australian universities.

<sup>39</sup> This is a problem that affects all language programs in Australia and in particular European languages, when research funding is diverted to such things as: An Environmentally Sustainable Australia, The Promotion and Maintaining of Good Health, The Development of Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries, and Policies and Initiatives for Safeguarding Australia.

<sup>40</sup> There are exceptions: on 10 May 2008, *The Weekend Australian Review* published an article titled "Deborah Hope meets Vrasidas Karalis, professor and writer". The article praises Karalis' book, *Recollections of Mr Manoly Lascaris*. This article possibly marks the first occasion on which a Modern Greek Lecturer has been lauded to this extent in Australia.

that failed — RMIT and La Trobe. LOGOS at Flinders University is the latest one, established in 2011.

In conclusion the remaining Greek university programs in Australia are few and some of them are vulnerable. Greek communities in Australia urgently need to develop long-term strategies for some of the remaining programs to survive successfully. All programs were originally established with great effort and financial support from the Australia's Greek community and the Greek government. The number of students of Greek alone will never be particularly high in Australia, but that does not mean that programs should be doomed. Universities will always be open to any kind of cooperation with the wider community, because this is one of their priorities: to engage with the communities. The problem is to persuade the Greek community in Australia how important it is to invest in Greek education and culture. This will require arduous effort and total dedication of lecturers in Modern Greek. It will take time and necessitate the emergence of a new generation of academics and an ambitious and sustainable plan of succession.

## Conclusions and proposals

It is evident that we have to deal with a crisis in the teaching of languages in general in Australia and in Modern Greek in particular which will become bigger in the near future and will have particular implications for all levels of education. The public education sector will face the most difficult challenges when one after the other Modern Greek programs will disappear from the Australian curriculum. And this is a real possibility. It means that Greek–Australians, departments of education and related educational institutions, if they care about the maintenance of “community” languages in Australia, must not become complacent about the situation and “laissez faire” without thinking and carefully planning for the future. They need to develop effective strategies if they are to carry out their tasks successfully.

A committed role that demonstrates great readiness, vigilance and support for existing programs, is required. There is no leading Greek Foundation in Australia that can effectively play this role and we desperately need one, because the steadfast commitment required must come from the people themselves as a whole, working through existing Greek institutions. In Australia there are currently many debates on the teaching of languages and much official policy rhetoric which, in many cases, will not deliver concrete outcomes. The authors of this paper were so amazed by the enthusiastic reaction from the Greek community in Australia, when the good news about the inclusion of Modern Greek in the Australian Curriculum was announced by ACARA. People are not realising that a purely “political” decision has really little to do with the existing realities in the education sector. Such developments should always be accompanied by a “cold” analysis and rational understanding to avoid deceptions and negativity.

We need a much more realistic approach to define what the teaching of Greek in Australia should entail. Currently, we need a dramatic increase in knowledge of the

Greek language and culture amongst not only students but teachers as well. Opportunities for professional training and development for teachers to improve their qualifications and expertise need to be provided. New teachers also should be encouraged to begin their pedagogical training degrees otherwise in the near future it is going to be impossible to replace retiring teachers.

The participation of parents is a vital part of the humanistic endeavour that Greek language learning needs, especially if it is to thrive. Parental involvement in the family home will assist greatly in motivating students to participate in meaningful language experiences and in promoting language and culture beyond clichés and stereotypes. Children need to see the richness that flows from deep intellectual engagement in learning Greek and understand that this is an international enterprise to successful global careers. Greek communities must all endeavour to play their part in helping to stem the flow of the decline in the numbers of students studying languages, make the right decisions and upgrade the significance of the language.

In statistical terms it is important for all parties involved in the education of children learning a language, to stay informed and understand the numbers. Knowledge of the current statistics in primary and secondary school languages education will allow them to make decisions about choices and priorities. There are many arenas in which knowledge and vigilance can work to generate improvements. It is also clear that the ethnic schools are really very important and it is important to consider effective strategies to maintain the success of these programs. More than one third of all students learning Modern Greek in Australia are attending an ethnic school program. Examining these schools closely we came to realise that there are cases in some schools where the numbers are very low and a better solution could be to amalgamate to create bigger and more powerful institutions. We need to think globally and not just locally, in such an instance, so that distance to travel, for example, does not impede our vision of a merger. Similarly, another effective strategy might be to form a committee that has the ability to raise funds to ensure the success of any given merger to support the successful continuation of Greek language learning.<sup>41</sup>

Greek language programs at universities in Australia have had to endure certain obstacles over the last two decades and there is a need for the language programs to adapt very quickly to survive beyond 2015. There is work to do in and out of the

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<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile other countries are progressing in an assertive fashion. The Japan Foundation, for example, since 1972 has promoted language and culture. We visited several Asian websites to peruse the work achieved by different languages groups and felt that the outcomes were truly exemplary. We found news of a public symposium organised by India: "In this symposium, the panellists looked at Japan, India and Asia as a whole through economic, diplomatic, political and cultural lens, discussing a new Japan-India relationship — one that would be neither an economic / business-only-approach nor merely the promotion of a superficial cultural understanding. They would aim to go beyond any simplistic framework such as a 'Japan-India partnership vis-à-vis China', and search for ways for India and Japan, together with their neighbours, including China and the United States, to come together to tackle the common issues that the Asian region faces and, in so doing, help create a new Asia".

university campuses as we face the adversities and challenges by keeping abreast of future pathways and new technologies.

For purely logistical reasons the Greek language is considered to be a “community language” and therefore really only relevant to the Greek Diaspora. It is argued that the Greek language — while it has been a source of global civilization — cannot play a critical role in the current discussions and engagement with the world anymore. This is something that needs to be addressed and the focus should be directed to more realistic attitudes since we cannot persuade people by referring to the “glory days of Ancient Greece”. Almost all departments of Ancient Greek studies in Australia have been removed. This paper has demonstrated that Greek is under pressure due to the emergence of two major rivals.

- The big European languages: Generally, the vast majority of Australian students select European languages such as French (a popular language choice based on its prestigious background); Spanish (500 million speakers worldwide and the first spoken language of 73% after the English language in the United States); German (although the numbers are decreasing, German is still a strong language due to Australia’s strong German ancestry and because the German economy is one of the strongest), and Italian (numbers have also decreased but the language maintain its strength due to Italian migration and Roman Catholic system of education).
- Asian languages: Australia’s interest lies in its ties with Asia including a specific focus on the learning and teaching of Asian languages in the new Australian Curriculum.

However, this does not mean that other languages, like Modern Greek, should be excluded. There are many “community” languages (which include European, Middle Eastern and Asian languages) equally important to Australia. This also means that Greek could likewise become a possible choice, with the right exposure. The role of the school is also an important consideration mainly because school principals/ leaders can decide which languages will be taught in their schools and why. Often these choices are consistent with Australia’s foreign policy, but there is also room within the new Australian Curriculum for other languages, depending on demand and school size and also if the community leaders can develop the right engagement and strategy.

There is no doubt that the strongest incentive for teaching the Greek language should be connected with Greece and its Diaspora. Currently Greece is experiencing a deep financial crisis and this of course has profound implications for the teaching of Greek globally and in Australia. It is very hard indeed to understand why — after two decades of large and continuous investment from Greece to boost Greek studies in Australia — the outcomes are poorer than expected. We have already explained that these efforts were not linked to proper strategies or proper follow-ups. The results will be evident now, when Greek Australians need to make urgent and accurate decisions

about the future of Modern Greek and Australia officially decided to support the Asian languages. The last opportunity now to promote the Greek language remains in the hands of the Greek Diaspora: the first generation worked hard, established institutions, opened and supported some schools, but possibly did not succeed in investing enough in the future and creating the right cultural awareness for the generations to come.<sup>42</sup>

The future is upon us now and, as a French philosopher put it, “the future lasts forever...”.

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<sup>42</sup> For example, there are community programs where second/third generation parents pay only \$60 a year, when their children receive more than one hundred hours of instruction per year. It is impossible to sustain any serious and respectful program with this kind of complacency.

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