



PRIME MINISTER

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GREEK NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY

I would like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on Greek National Independence Day, on the 158th anniversary of the beginning of the Greek war of independence against the Ottoman Empire.

The indomitable spirit that motivated the Greeks to throw off the foreign yoke after centuries of subjugation has been admired by all those who believe in man's unbreakable commitment to freedom, in the capacity for heroism and the willingness to fight against the odds. This spirit has been shown again and again, in the course of Greek history. It was clear in the second world war when Greece's fight against the vastly superior Fascist and Nazi forces set an example for the world, and in that war Australians and Greeks fought side by side in the defence of liberty.

Today gives us an opportunity to reflect on the contribution that the Greeks have made to the world, and to Australia. This contribution is manifest in the city states of Ancient Greece, in the supremely influential ideas of the Ancient Greeks: in philosophy, science, history, literature and politics; in the array of such great men as Homer, Socrates, Plato, Archimedes and Sophocles; in the marvels of Byzantium. All of this is not just history - it is a living part of the spirit of Western man, a spirit which is intrinsic to our every day lives, fundamental to our highest aspirations.

Australia as part of Western civilization would owe a debt to the Greeks for these inestimable contributions, even if not a single Greek had migrated to this country. But Australia's debt goes much deeper, for today there are some 300,000 people of Greek origin in Australia.

Australia has long offered to people of all nations the freedom and opportunity to build a better life for themselves and their children. The Greeks of Australia have taken this opportunity, and contributed to every sphere of Australian life: to the professions, to the arts, to industry and commerce. The contribution that the Greeks have made has earned them the respect of other Australians. Nothing can undermine this respect. It has been earned by the hard work and the sacrifices of tens of thousands of Greeks in this country. It is not open to doubt or to denigration. This is my Government's unequivocal position, and there should be no doubt about it.

Migration - moving away from accustomed surroundings, from family and friends is not an easy thing. Once the decision is taken and migration takes place, there are new problems to confront. Few native-born Australians in their lifetime have to face the same psychological and social stresses, the difficulties involved in adjusting to a new society and an alien language.

I believe that it is only recently that sufficient recognition has emerged amongst the wider Australian society of the tremendous problems and traumas migrants face, and that not enough was done in the past to assist migrants during their most difficult post-arrival period. I believe that a great step forward has been taken to remedy that situation by the Government accepting the recommendations of the Galbally report on post-arrival services to migrants. As a result of the report the Government is committed to spending an additional \$50 million over three years, and to consult migrants on implementation.

We believe that consultation is critical because migrants, and very notably the Greeks, have been able to establish a network of community institutions: churches, schools, newspapers, welfare societies, brotherhoods and sports bodies. These institutions, growing out of a determination to preserve valued aspects of the Greek heritage, have smoothed the difficult process of adjustment into Australian society. Far from being a barrier to the integration of Greeks into Australian society, they have helped that process, and enriched Australia as a whole.

Today, Australia has developed a vibrant multi-cultural society, and this Government is committed to the right of Ethnic groups to maintain their Ethnic languages and cultures, and committed to promoting a greater understanding and tolerance amongst all Australians.

Recognising the importance of the Media in an multi-cultural society, we are expanding Ethnic radio and will introduce Ethnic T.V. The pilot programmes on Ethnic T.V. will begin in Sydney and Melbourne late next month or early May, and provide Ethnic communities with the opportunity to participate in and comment on the form of the future service.

The Galbally report recommended that the National Ethnic Broadcasting Advisory Council undertake a series of public consultations with respect to the development of Ethnic T.V. It has now become clear that members of the Council are unable to devote the necessary time to carry out this recommendation. I am happy to announce that the Government is establishing a Consultative Committee on Ethnic T.V., to carry out the consultations envisaged in the Galbally report. It will comprise Mr Frank Galbally; Mr Keith Cairns, a director of the Herald-Sun T.V. Pty. Ltd., Melbourne; and Miss Paula Masselos, a social worker with the Greek Orthodox Community of St. George in Brisbane.

The Government is also firmly of the view that Australia will benefit from our Ethnic communities maintaining and renewing their ties with their families and friends overseas. At the moment we are negotiating cheaper air fares to Greece, which will greatly

help people wishing to visit Greece. We hope to be able to conclude an agreement in the near future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the fact that the Greek National Day is celebrated by the leaders of the Liberal and Labor parties, people whose origins are not Greek, underscores an important fact about contemporary Australian Society. There is now general recognition in this country that one can love Australia and be an effective member of Australian society while retaining an affection and preserving the cultural heritage of one's country of origin.

For many years it was believed by many people that to really become an Australian a migrant had to abandon the heritage of the country in which he was born and submerge himself in what were regarded as the essential characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon majority. Those days of Anglo-Saxon conformity are gone, and we are all better off for that.

Before the great postwar migration, Australia might have been regarded as a rather insular Anglo-Saxon society, but since then tens of thousands of people from Greece and many other nations have contributed to our material well being and to fashioning a distinctive Australian culture out of the best that many cultures have to offer. We are a better society for that. As Australians, all of us are participating in the evolution of a greater nation.

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