



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
VICTORIA

200th ANNIVERSARY OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE WREATH LAYING
Thursday 25 March 2021

Mr Steve Kyritsis OAM, President of the Hellenic RSL Sub-Branch and Secretary, **Mr Terry Kanellos OAM**

Mr Emmanuel S. Kakavelakis, Consul General of Greece

Mr Bill Papastergiadis OAM, President, Greek Community of Melbourne

Distinguished guests

First, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which we are gathering and pay my respects to their Elders past and present and to any Elders here with us.

My husband, Tony, and I are delighted to be joining you at this memorial, (for which we owe a debt of gratitude to the vision and generosity of our Greek community), on this important 200th anniversary of the war that brought Greece independence, ending centuries of Ottoman rule.

There is much to commemorate. And much to celebrate.

On behalf of the people of Victoria, we congratulate Greece on this anniversary and its thoughtful approach to it, highlighting both the important historical events surrounding independence and the achievements and aspirations of the modern nation.

There is so much that we in this State owe to Greece and to the Greek people.

Of course, it is the Ancient Greeks who gave us democracy, the greatest philosophers and the Olympics. But it is the modern Greece that has indelibly changed our landscape through immigration.

Although Victoria's flourishing Greek community has its roots as far back as the Gold Rush in the 1850s, we have greatly benefitted from the waves of immigration that have occurred over the many decades since.

It is well known, of course, that Melbourne has one of the largest Greek populations in the world. One hundred and seventy thousand people of Greek ancestry call Victoria home, including almost 50,000 Victorians who were born in Greece.

While these numbers paint an impressive picture of the size of the Greek community in our State, they only tell part of the Greek-Victorian story and the significant role the community has played in shaping modern Melbourne.

It has made its mark in so many areas.

Of course, in food and hospitality: it has been such a seminal influence in a sector that is so important to the culture and reputation of our city.

But Greek Victorians have also played integral roles in *all* spheres of life in our State, including in politics, manufacturing, business, the arts and sport.

I note too Melbourne's sister-city relationship with Thessaloniki, the second-largest city in Greece. Just like Melbourne, Thessaloniki is also considered by some to be its nation's cultural capital!

The Greek community has been, and will continue to be, such an integral part of our State's vibrant multicultural society and – in the words of our State's motto – our '*Peace and Prosperity*'.

On behalf of all Victorians, with the laying of the wreath today, we remember the sacrifice of those to whom much is owed, and to our Greek friends, we say 'Happy Bicentenary of Independence'.