

Greek Minister of National Defence Nikos Dendias visits the Holy Archdiocese of Australia

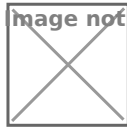


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“Hellenism lives and flourishes here in distant Australia, and for as long as our Greek Orthodox Archdiocese and the Ecumenical Patriarchate remain present on these shores, and for as long as the Orthodox priest celebrates the Divine Liturgy in Greek, Hellenism has a future and we fear nothing.” This resounding and optimistic message was proclaimed by His Eminence Archbishop Makarios of Australia as he welcomed the Greek Minister of National Defence, Mr Nikolaos Dendias, to the headquarters of the Holy Archdiocese in Sydney on Thursday, 16 July.

On the occasion of Mr Dendias’ visit, a Doxology service was celebrated to welcome him at the Cathedral of the Annunciation of Our Lady. His Eminence was joined by Their Graces, Bishop Evmenios of Chora and Bishop Athinagoras of Canberra, members of the Holy Eparchial Synod, as well as the Assistant Bishops, Their Graces, Bishop Iakovos of Miletoupolis, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Saint George at Yellow Rock; Bishop Christodoulos of Magnesia, Chief Secretary of the Holy Eparchial Synod; and Bishop Christophoros of Kerasounta, Chancellor of the Holy Archdiocese.

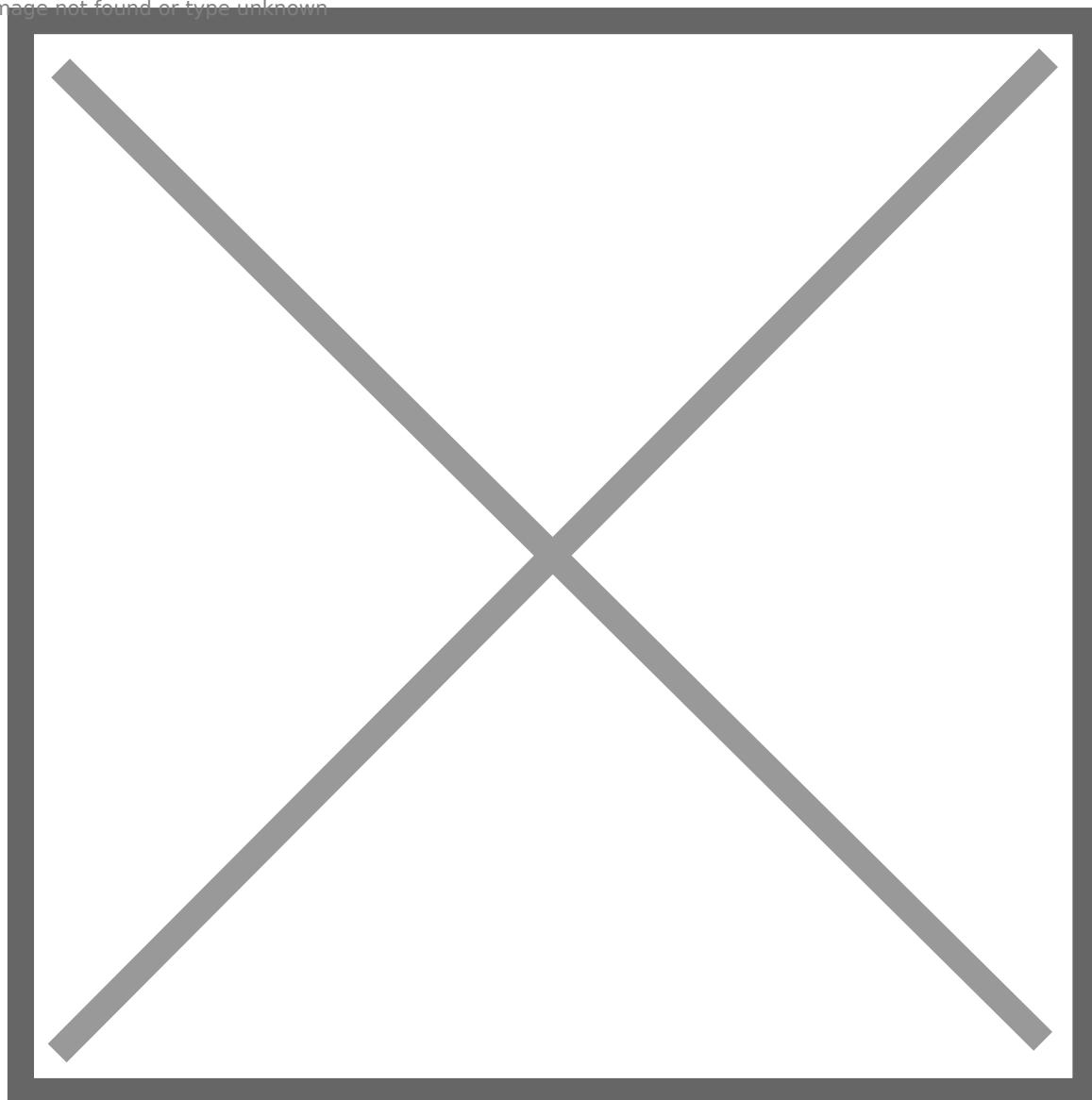
Also in attendance were the Ambassador of Greece to Australia, His Excellency Mr Stavros Venizelos; the Consul-General of Greece in Sydney, Mr Georgios Skemperis; the New South Wales Minister for Finance, The Hon. Ms Courtney Houssos, representing the Premier of New South Wales, The Hon. Mr Chris Minns; clergy; the Archons of the Great Church of Christ, Messrs Nicholas Pappas, Stan Kondylios and Theo Penklis; as well as presidents and representatives of organisations, institutions and parishes-communities of the Holy Archdiocese.

In his address, the Archbishop also emphasised that “the heart of the Greek diaspora beats strongly here in Australia, and every beat cries out Greece and Romiosyni.”

“We love Australia,” he observed, “because it is our home, because it welcomed thousands of Greeks during the difficult years of migration, and because it offers us all the blessings of God. Yet we never forget Greece. On the contrary, we preserve

our customs and traditions, our heritage and our language, and with pride we raise the Greek flag in every corner of the Fifth Continent.”

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The Greek Minister of National Defence responded with warm words, congratulating Archbishop Makarios on the invaluable work he carries out for the benefit of the Greek Australian community.

“It is a great joy and a warming of the soul for me to see, under your leadership, the Hellenism of Australia united,” he stated at the outset. He also thanked His Eminence “for the great effort he makes to maintain the close connection of the Greek diaspora with Mother Greece.”

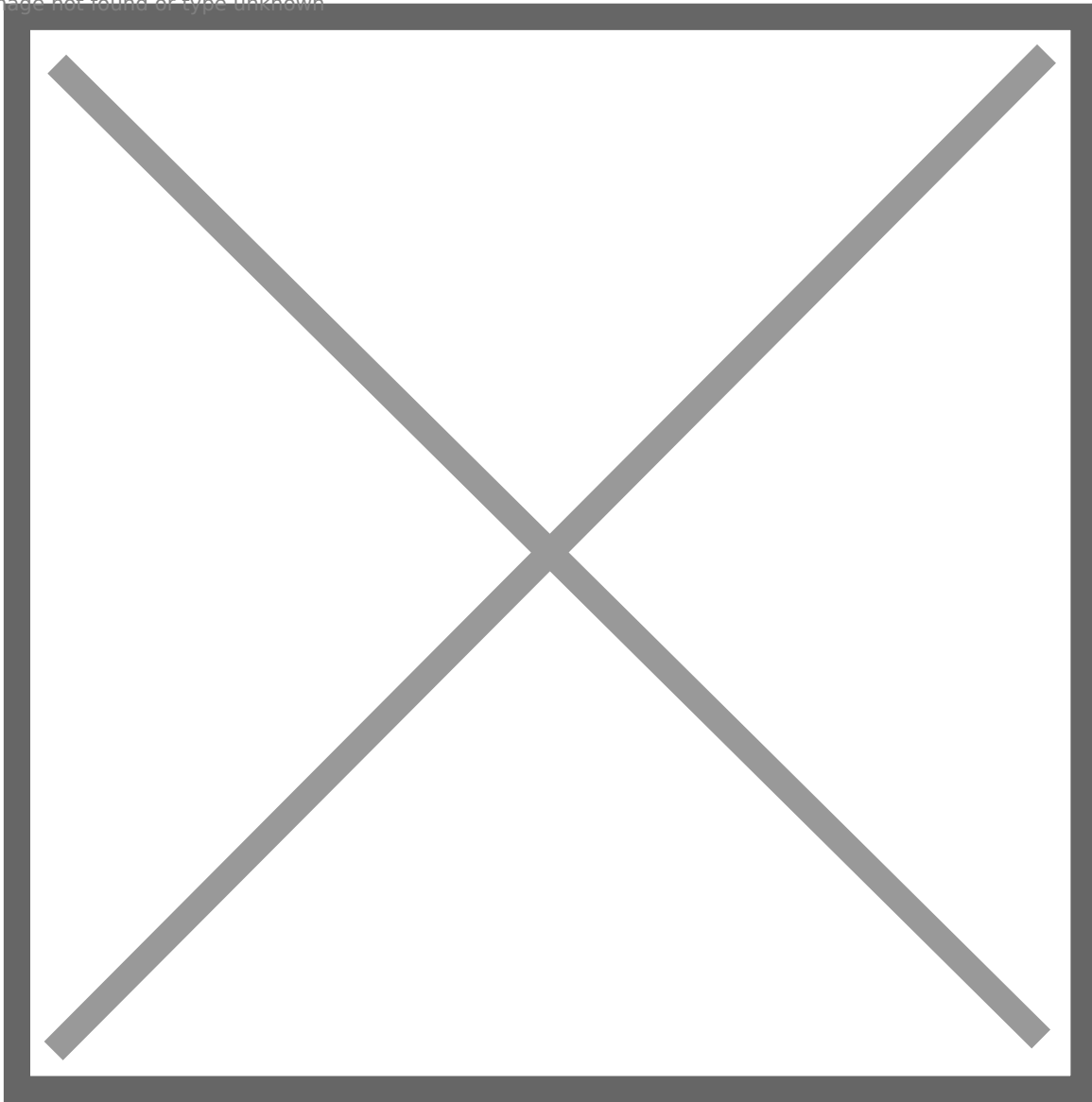
Mr Dendias further acknowledged the enduring and fundamental contribution of the Church to the historical journey of Hellenism and its decisive role, particularly within the Greek diaspora. He also expressed his admiration for the iconography of

the Cathedral and his emotion upon entering and seeing the Greek flag and young Greek children dressed in the costumes of Evzones and Macedonian fighters.

At the conclusion of the Doxology, Archbishop Makarios presented the distinguished visitor with the highest honour of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia, the Medal of the Order of the Christ-loving with a Star, in recognition of his service to the homeland and to Hellenism throughout the world.

In presenting the personality, political career and achievements of the honouree, His Eminence stated, among other things: "We are particularly pleased that, during this turbulent period, the defence of Greece is in strong and responsible hands, as demonstrated by your actions and your work. We rejoice wholeheartedly because, in every position in which Mother Greece and the Greek people have called upon you to serve, you have proven yourself and have struggled with zeal, self-denial and self-sacrifice for the common good and for our national interests."

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Following the Doxology, Minister Dendias held a private meeting with Archbishop Makarios in the Archbishop's Office. The meeting took place in an atmosphere of mutual concern for the advancement of the interests of the Nation and the Church.

The customary exchange of gifts also took place in the Archbishop's Office, after which a luncheon was offered in honour of the Minister in the Hall of Saint Andrew's Theological College.



