

Archdiocese of Australia calls on Le Trobe University to reconsider decision to scrap Greek Language Studies program



The Archbishop of Australia, his Eminence Makarios, has addressed a letter to the Chancellor of La Trobe University, John Brumby, to express frustration and concern over the university's stated intention to abolish a Greek studies program at the highly distinguished Melbourne university.

A recently unveiled strategic plan by the University, which was recently put into consultation, calls for the closure of three study programs, one of which concerns the Greek language. The purported reason is the low student enrollment in the program, as well as cost-cutting.

Archbishop Makarios urged the University administration to reconsider the issue, expressing his conviction over the viability of the Greek Studies Program and assuring the University of the Holy Archdiocese of Australia's solid support in this direction.

He also reminded that the ethnic Greek community in Melbourne and the State of

Victoria. in general, is one of the largest Greek-speaking communities in the Greek diaspora worldwide.



† Archbishop Makarios of Australia

Protocol No.: 2173

Mr. John Brumby AO
Chancellor
La Trobe University

Dear Chancellor,

It is with grave regret and concern that I write to you upon learning of the stated intention of La Trobe University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences to terminate the Greek language program. I express my profound disappointment at this projected course of events and state my utmost support for the continuation of Greek language studies at Latrobe. As such, I emphatically urge you to reconsider.

While I understand that budgetary concerns have motivated the proposed cancellation, one cannot shy away from the fact that the Greek community in Melbourne and, more widely, in Victoria, is one of the largest Greek speaking communities of the Greek diaspora globally. It is precisely this diaspora of Orthodox faith that the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia represents and has as its duty the preservation and continuation of Greek language, faith and culture.

It should be remembered it was the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, which is the largest provider of primary and secondary Greek language education in Australia, that pioneered the institution of Modern Greek studies at tertiary level in Victoria some decades ago. LaTrobe University's Greek programme, the last of its kind in Victoria, is the fruit of those efforts. If it is terminated, then there will be no opportunity for students to study Modern Greek at a tertiary level, anywhere in Victoria.

I note further that LaTrobe University is situated within a demographic that contains one of the largest concentrations of Greek-Australians in Melbourne. A significant portion of the student population of LaTrobe University is also comprised of Greek-Australians. The Greek Australian community, especially its members that reside in your locality, have made an immensely positive impact in all facets of Victorian

society. More so, the Greek language and culture is important not only to the Greek Australian community but Australian society as a whole. It is imperative that this important community language can be studied in what constitutes, its natural environment, so that the University's commitment to cultural diversity is not compromised.

Any decision predicated upon a perceived lack of enrolments is premature as Greek language programs at VCE level are in transition and it is anticipated that this will motivate children of Greek heritage, but also students of the broader community to choose and undertake studies of the Greek language. These changes will be implemented by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA) and introduced in 2021 for the study of VCE unit 3 and 4 languages.

I acknowledge that universities Australia-wide are faced with many financial hardships. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia urges all levels of Australian governments, particularly the Commonwealth Government, to provide support for the important legacy, history and continuity of academic leadership offered within La Trobe University's Greek language programme. The Archdiocese is willing to mobilise the community so as to enter into a partnership with the University with a view to keeping the Greek language programme viable.

As Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia, I offer my love and support to all students, their families and members of the broader community, who are devastated by this unfortunate proposal made by La Trobe University.

I once more urge you as the Chancellor of La Trobe University to reconsider any proposal to terminate the Greek language program and I remain,

In Sydney, on the 13th day of November, 2020

Prayerfully yours



† Archbishop MAKARIOS

Primate of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia

