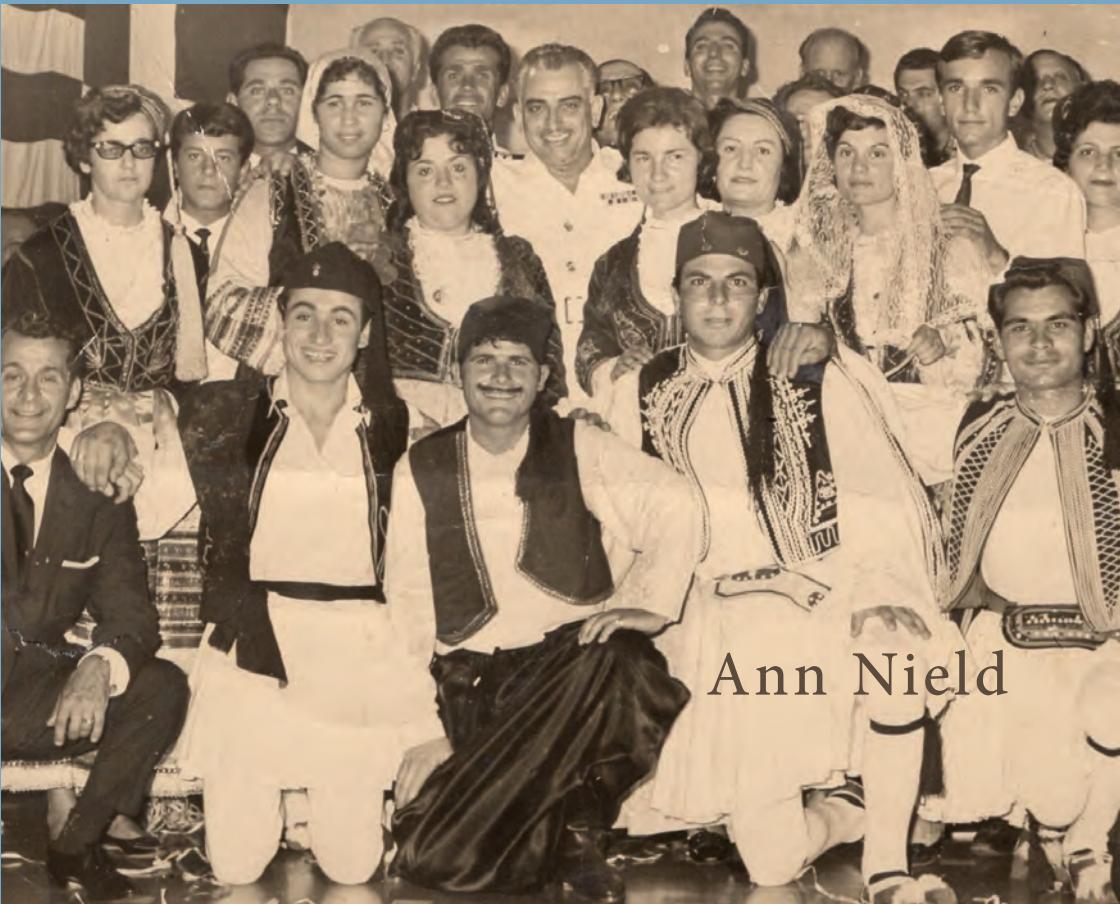


OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE

GREEK SETTLEMENT IN OAKLEIGH

To 'Okli είναι η ζωή μας



Ann Nield

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History Monash Inc. is the historical society for Oakleigh and region in Victoria, Australia, within the City of Monash.

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Ann Nield
c/o History Monash Inc.
PO BOX 2254, OAKLEIGH VIC 3166
www.historymonash.org.au

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Front cover image: On board the SS *Ellinis* en route to Australia in April 1965. Peter Menidis, who settled in Oakleigh with his wife Sophia, is second from left in front row. (Source: Menidis family)

Back cover image: As part of the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of Oakleigh in 2003 (Oakleigh's 'Our Beginnings Festival'), students from the Oakleigh Greek Orthodox College (now Oakleigh Grammar School) presented traditional Greek dances. (Source: *Oakleigh Monash Leader*, 24 Mar 2003, p. 1. Photo by Renae Droop.)



History Monash Inc. gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the City of Monash Council in the publication of this book, through the 2025/2026 Monash Community Grants program.

Foreword

The preservation of Hellenic history, and its impact in Victoria, is an important part of our multicultural legacy in Australia. In this publication, it is commendable that History Monash (Oakleigh), which has a long history of fostering the study, preservation and publication of the history of the Oakleigh District, prioritised a major study on the settlement and impact of Greek migrants in the municipality. The secretary of History Monash, Ann Nield, embarked on the extensive journey to document the contributions of the Greek community in the city. Undertaking this important work voluntarily, she interviewed and transcribed oral histories, searched archives and newspaper reports and documented information from a wide range of sources.

The colossal amount of work which is evident in this publication documents the arrival, development and extensive contributions of persons of Greek ancestry in the city of Oakleigh. It also documents the work of many persons involved in local community organisations that have supported the community more generally.

There is no doubt about the importance of this pioneering research and the impact that this work will have in promoting

a greater understanding of the Greeks in Australia and more importantly the positive role that Greek migrants have made in their local communities.

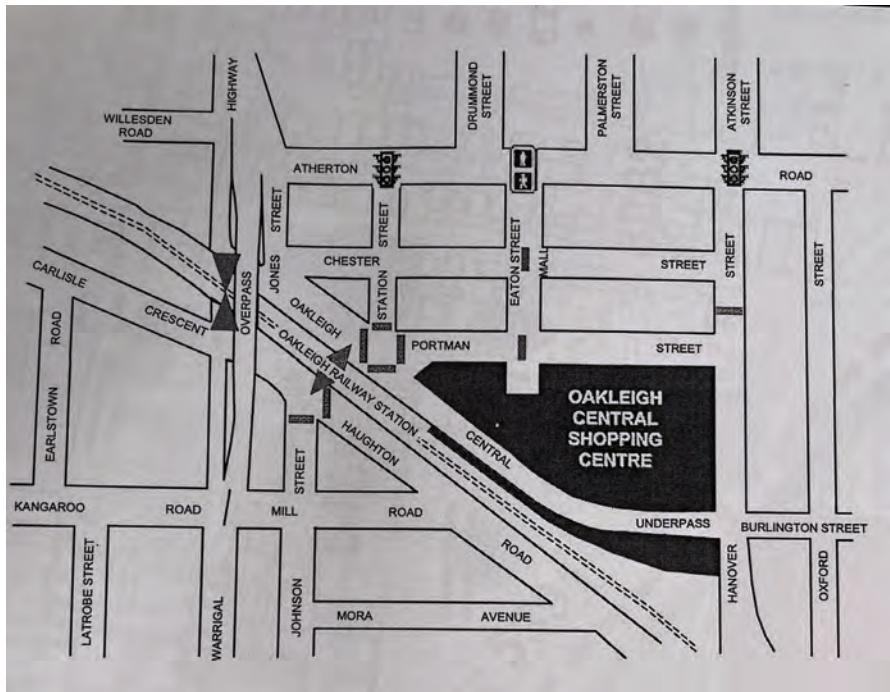
I commend the pioneering and important work of Ann Nield and History Monash and thank them for their generosity and dedication.

George Lekakis AO



L-R: In 2000, George Lekakis AO, then Chair, Ethnic Communities Council and Director, Migrant Resource Centre; the Hon. Steve Bracks AC, then Premier of Victoria; the Hon. Frank Crean, former Deputy Prime Minister of Australia and member for Melbourne Ports, 2000. (Source: George Lekakis)

Oakleigh's town centre in 2002¹





Greek business signs around the Oakleigh shopping precinct 2024.

Translations, from top down: Delicatessen, Greek Butcher, The Squirrel's Den, People's Market (Photos: Ann Nield)

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Introduction

‘Oakleigh was just a village when we came.’

‘There were hardly any other Greek families in Oakleigh then.’

‘The Greek centre was Station Street.’

These and similar comments have been made about Oakleigh as it appeared to those who came to Australia from Greece in the mid-twentieth century. Many Greek migrants had initially lived in inner Melbourne, and they found Oakleigh to be a very Anglocentric, quiet area. Within this area, however, their families built a closely-knit Greek–Australian community focussed around their church and school, with pride in their traditions which continues to this day. In the process, Oakleigh has changed considerably.

These days the shopping precinct resonates with Greek greetings and conversations. Older men sit in groups at cafes, drinking strong black coffee while their wives patronise the specialty food shops. All around are signs in Greek and for Greek-owned businesses: cafes, restaurants, lawyers, travel agents, a pharmacy, butchers, fishmongers, delicatessens, baptismal clothing and ecclesiastic items, and other shops. Step inside the Oakleigh Central mall and sometimes the fishmonger will perform a spontaneous ‘Zorba’ dance for you.

Although Oakleigh has a long history of First Nations occupation and multi-faceted immigration, it is now well known in Victoria and beyond for its Greek character. Visitors come from far and wide to experience the food and the *kefi* (joyful atmosphere).

The purpose of this study is to explore this important part of Oakleigh's history. It highlights the courage of those who migrated from Greece and aims to help others to understand their experiences. It attempts to show when and why so many immigrants from Greece came to Oakleigh and how they have changed this area.



This book draws upon a variety of sources, including seventeen interviews by the author with people who came to Oakleigh or surrounds from Greece, or who are the children of such migrants. For reasons of privacy, their names and the full details of their stories are not included here, but they generously agreed to provide their stories to History Monash Inc., where these are archived. The interviewees represent a broad cross-section of the Oakleigh Greek-Australian community, and their families came from a wide range of places, such as the Greek mainland, Greek islands, Turkey and Egypt. The years of migration to Australia for this group ranged from 1920 to the early 1970s, with the majority arriving in the 1950s and 1960s.

INTRODUCTION

While this study focusses upon Oakleigh, there was significant Greek settlement in nearby suburbs such as Clayton, Mount Waverley and Huntingdale. What is now Hughesdale, where the Greek Orthodox Church and school are located, was part of Oakleigh before 1994 and is treated here as such.

I wish to acknowledge the Boon wurrung and Woi wurrung people of the Kulin nation who were the Traditional Owners of the lands on which this research took place. I recognise their continuing connection to the land and waterways and pay my respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

PART ONE

Aspects of Greek
migration to
Australia



Two early Greek settlers in Australia having a rest while on a picnic in 1926.
Greek Archives (1926). La Trobe. Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/612edb1e50bf4>

Greek migration to Australia: the early years

THE FIRST MIGRANTS to Australia from Greece were seven young sailors convicted of piracy by a naval court in Britain. They were transported to Australia and arrived in August 1829. Two of the sailors remained in Australia after they were pardoned.²

Greek migration to Australia in significant numbers began in the 1850s during the gold rushes. Earlier settlers from Greece had worked mainly in mining camps, on the wharves or on ships plying the Australian coast. According to the Victorian Immigration Museum, ‘many Greeks were among the sailors who left their English ships in Australian waters’ when the gold rush news came through. As most of these Greek men intended to return to their homeland, only a few brought their wives, so in 1871 there were only 19 Greece-born women in Victoria compared to 127 men. After the gold rushes, Greeks who stayed found work mainly in restaurants, cafes and

shops.³ Between the 1840s and 1900, most of the Greece-born migrants to Victoria came from the Ionian islands, especially Ithaca and Kythera.⁴

Further immigrants from Greece came in a process of chain migration, encouraged by those who were already in Australia. In 1896, regular church services were led by a Greek Orthodox priest in Sydney and Melbourne,⁵ and the first Greek Orthodox church in Victoria was opened in East Melbourne in 1901.⁶

The 1901 Australian census recorded 878 Greece-born people. Many were owners of, or employees at, shops and restaurants, and some were cane cutters in Queensland.⁷

Migration to Australia from Greece increased between the two World Wars, partly because of the expulsion of Greeks from Asia Minor in the early 1920s (known as *η καταστροφή*, i.e. catastrophe), and also because the USA, a hitherto alternative destination for Greek migration, imposed immigrant quotas.⁸ The scale of the migration to Australia was, however, also limited due to a quota system applied by the Australian Government on non-British migrants. Only one hundred Greeks per month were allowed to migrate to Australia between 1925 and 1929.⁹

After World War II, migration from Greece increased again due to the wartime devastation of Greece, the Greek civil war between 1946 and 1949 and the perception that

there were good employment opportunities in Australia. In 1945, the Australian Government established the first federal Department of Immigration, arguing that Australia's population needed to increase, partly to strengthen its self-defence capacity but also to develop economically. The slogan, 'Populate or Perish' was promoted by Arthur Calwell, the first Minister for Immigration.

The Australian Government initially favoured British immigrants and those who were displaced by World War II. The Displaced Persons scheme ended, however, in 1953.¹⁰ Australia became a member of the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM), formed in 1951, which had the aim of helping to resettle Europeans to less crowded countries.¹¹ Australia took people from countries such as The Netherlands, Germany, Italy, Austria, Greece and Yugoslavia. This was facilitated with Greece through the Assisted Migration Agreement signed in 1952 which provided assisted passages to eligible Greeks. It is estimated that in 'the post war years, 33.8% of Greek migrants came through this [the Assisted Migration] scheme. The remaining 66% were sponsored by friends and relatives already in Australia and required to pay their own fare.'¹²

Migration from Greece expanded rapidly through the 1960s, and at its peak, there were 160,200 Greece-born people in Australia, recorded in the 1971 census, with 47 per cent living in Melbourne.¹³ Many Greeks wished to escape the Greek

military junta of 1967 to 1974.¹⁴ The Turkish occupation of northern Cyprus in 1974 led to a substantial increase in the Greek Cypriot community in Australia.

The rate of Greek migration to Australia then declined in the 1980s and 1990s due to Greece joining the European Union in 1981 and in 1992 becoming a party to the Schengen Agreement. This made it easier for Greeks to work in other parts of Europe.

Greek immigrants were regarded by Australian authorities as stayers and battlers who were prepared to work hard and make sacrifices. Although the Australian Government had initially primarily targeted rural and construction work for migrants, ‘By the second generation they were in a wide variety of professions, trades and businesses.’¹⁵

In the 2021 census, 424,744 Australians self-identified as having Greek ancestry, which was 1.7% of the Australian population. Of these, people who had been born in Greece numbered 92,314.¹⁶

Women migrants from Greece

IN THE EARLY days of Greek migration to Australia, there was a huge preponderance of male arrivals.¹⁷ Many of these were young single men, intending to return home after achieving their financial goals. In addition, Greek law initially restricted the migration of single women.¹⁸ From the mid-1950s, this gender imbalance led to efforts by both sponsoring Greeks and the Australian Government to bring out more Greek women.

In 1956, the Australian Government introduced a program to bring single Greek women to Australia. Before embarkation they were given basic English lessons and trained for domestic work. As assisted migrants, they would be obliged to work for two years in Australia in jobs which the Australian Government would find for them.

This program allowed single women to migrate to Australia independently of husbands or male relatives. The reasons for these women entering the scheme were mostly financial. They

could support themselves and send money back to their families in Greece. Moreover, they could sponsor family members to come to Australia.¹⁹

While this government program provided prospective wives for the male Greek migrants, many of the men, once they had established themselves financially in Australia, privately sought brides from home. If they could not afford to travel back to Greece, a number arranged for young women, often from their own villages or towns, to be sent to Australia for marriage, sometimes without the prospective couple meeting beforehand. These were popularly known as 'photo brides' as the couple exchanged photos before the marriage. (Unfortunately, according to some interviewees for this study, sometimes the photos belied their subjects.) This phenomenon not only helped the gender imbalance in the Greek community in Australia, but it also addressed the gender imbalance in Greece caused by male emigration.

Relatives and friends played an important part in setting up matches. Often the women would be engaged before they left Greece, and in some cases a proxy marriage was arranged in Greece, so that the couple was already married before they met. This was brought about by the bride undergoing the marriage ceremony with a male who stood in for the groom who was in Australia. For example, one young girl living in a Peloponnese village was married at age seventeen, shortly after World War II, via a proxy marriage before she left Greece. Her mother arranged the marriage because her younger son

wished to get married but according to custom, could not do this until his older sister was married. The prospective bride went with her brother to her future husband's town, far away in northern Greece, for the proxy marriage. She knew little about her husband but did have a photo of him, and he met her at the airport when she arrived in Australia.²⁰ (The phenomenon of proxy marriages was not uncommon among other nationalities in the early years of migration to Australia, as noted by Museums Victoria.²¹)



Baggage label c. 1959 used for luggage placed in the ship's hold. (Used with permission of Museums Victoria. <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/415718>)

In the 1950s, ships bringing large numbers of women immigrants were popularly called 'bride ships' and the women were met at Australian ports by crowds of men who were their husbands, fiancés, relatives and friends. One of the most iconic migrant ships, SS *Patris*,²² made ninety-one voyages to Australia between 1959 and 1975 bringing Greek migrants, and it was particularly known for bringing future brides.²³



Painting of the SS Patris by the artist Dacre Smyth AO from his book Immigrant Ships to Australia. (Permission generously given by the Smyth family, January 2025)

By the late 1960s, plane travel was becoming cheaper. The Chandris line which had brought so many migrants to Australia phased out its migrant voyages in 1977.²⁴

Irrespective of their mode of travel, these women showed enormous courage in travelling into the unknown, often without the support of friends and immediate family, and with little prospect of a return to Greece.

By the early 1960s, Greece-born married women in Victoria were employed at around three times the rate of Australian married women.²⁵ Working outside the home was not usual Greek practice for married women at the time, but it was financially necessary for the migrant families. While the

Australian Government had paid for women to be trained as domestic workers, factory work was often more lucrative.²⁶ The work undertaken by Greek (and other migrant) women was poorly paid, unsafe, exhausting and often dirty and noisy. Harassment and humiliation were not uncommon. 'Yet the women endured poorly paid and repetitive work for reasons of economic survival and in anticipation of providing their children with better opportunities.'²⁷



A photograph of a Greek wedding in Canberra in early 1930. Both the bride and groom came from the small island of Kythera. Greek Archives (1930). Greek Wedding, 1930. La Trobe.

Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/618dbba546c4e>



Members of the Andrianakis and Lefas families gathered at Station Pier, Port Melbourne, in 1957 to welcome a relative, Maria (second left, back row), who had come to Australia to marry Petro Lefas (back row, left) in 1957. Georgia and Dimosthenis Andrianakis (back row, right) were the matchmakers of the marriage. (Permission to use photo from Museums Victoria.

<https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1689630>²⁸

The journey to Australia

ALL OF THOSE who travelled by sea to Australia spoke of the apparent luxury of their ship and the fun onboard: the good food, the dancing, playing cards and other games and watching movies. (Ships of the Chandris line provided Greek-speaking staff, Greek food and Greek entertainment.) Basic English lessons were also available. Some of the travellers had brought traditional Greek costumes in which they dressed for celebrations. In some ways, this journey helped to facilitate the transition from one homeland to another: it provided a buffer period, built friendships which would be of later support and reinforced a feeling of adventure. It also led to some marriages among the travellers. Ships on which the interviewees travelled included the Chandris line vessels *Ellinis*, *Australis* and *Patris*. A journey of around thirty-seven days was typical. For the women who came by plane (for example, through the Assisted Migration Scheme), the break from home would have seemed more sudden and raw.



On board the SS Ellinis en route from Greece to Australia in April 1965. Peter Menidis, who settled in Oakleigh with his wife Sophia, is indicated with the blue arrow.

(Source: Menidis family.)

A few interviewees for this study spoke of the shock of having no one to meet them at the wharf or airport when they arrived, for example, because of ships changing schedules or destination ports. One young man wished that he could return home when he found no one waiting for him at Melbourne airport, and he didn't know where to go. Fortunately, he saw someone who looked Greek, and this man helped him to catch a taxi to a Greek cafe, one of the earliest sources of advisory service for Greek migrants.

THE JOURNEY TO AUSTRALIA



A 1950 photograph of a Greek family of migrants from Macedonia, Greece. The photograph is taken in the port of Piraeus and captures the family as they prepare to commence their voyage to Australia. Greek Archives (2021). Greek family of migrants from Macedonia, Greece, 1950.

La Trobe. Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/610b2977dbd91>



A photograph of Greek migrants aboard ship on their way to Australia in the 1920s.

Greek Archives (1920). En route to Australia, 1920s. La Trobe. Physical object.

<https://doi.org/10.26181/612885f0da888>

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A group of Greek migrants on their way to Australia in make-up and costumes after their theatrical performance on the ship. Greek Archives (1949). Aboard ship entertainment, 1949.

La Trobe. Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/613e805d86981>

Hopes for life in Australia

THE MAIN MOTIVATION for migration to Australia was a desire for a better life, from a financial and security perspective, than appeared possible in Greece. People also migrated because of family obligations.

Financial motivations included limited job opportunities in Greece, the devastation of the Greek economy after World War II, and real financial privation, such as subsisting on a small piece of rural land. One interviewee spoke of the hunger on her island and of families encouraging their children to migrate, saying, 'Go and prosper, and if you can, send money back so we can also purchase food? Another spoke of tending, as a teenager, his family's animals which included seven cows. In spring and summer until he was eighteen years old, he had to live outside in the mountains with his cousin, looking after them. It was common for those who migrated to be hard-working and enterprising from a young age. One man had undertaken brick work to help build a local high school while

he himself attended primary school. These qualities would stand migrants in good stead in their new homeland.

Some dramatic stories of migration related to insecurity in Greece. One Cretan family had assisted a fugitive Australian soldier during World War II at great risk to themselves, with their little boys taking food to his hideout. After the war, they were sponsored as migrants by him. Another migrant said that his mother gave birth to him in a hut in a forest during World War II, too afraid to go to her village in case the German army exacted reprisals. The same man spoke about his own later experience of the Greek civil war dividing families and villages, and the need to always be careful about what one said and did.

Family obligations included responding to the calls of relatives who had already migrated, the hope of being able to send money back to Greece to help the family and, in the case of women, marrying someone in Australia so that their brothers could then marry. One woman's married sister had to migrate to Australia so that her husband could look after his own sister who was already there. The woman was asked by her married sister to come with her, which she did, but neither of the two siblings was enthusiastic about leaving Greece. One young woman migrated in order to spare her father the onerous cost of a dowry (*προίκα*) for her if she married in Greece. A marriage in Australia, should this happen, would not require the dowry.

Most of the interviewees referred to relatives already in Australia who had encouraged them or their parents to migrate. Uncles were a frequent link, and they then acted *in loco parentis* for their young relatives who migrated.

Most of the interviewed men had held positive expectations of their new life, particularly in financial terms. The reports back from relatives and friends already settled in Australia helped to build this optimism. Many intended to return to Greece after a few years, financially better off. It was a blow for some to find that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to save enough for the fare home, once food and rent had been paid out of their low wages.

Many Greek arrivals found that life was very different to what they had visualised. Melbourne, for example, was not the glamorous metropolis they had expected, and life in the suburbs could seem dull. One woman was amazed by the quietness and emptiness of the streets when she walked to work at around 8 am. Finding companionship and entertainment was harder than at home. A male interviewee remembered going to Chapel Street in Prahran to play cards – uncharacteristically for him, for money – with other men, out of desperation for company. Those who lacked a car could feel bored and trapped. It was harder for the women, and one spoke of frequently sitting alone in a park reading a Greek book. Some women remembered crying a lot in the early days.

Living conditions for new arrivals were often not easy. It was usual for single men and women to share a bedroom with other new arrivals of the same gender. Families would often live in one bedroom of a share house until they became financially established. They shared the kitchen with other tenants, sometimes in half-hour shifts in the mornings so they could all be ready for work on time. Living in share houses enabled Greek migrants to save for a deposit for their own homes, and after they moved out of the share houses, others moved in to continue the process. One woman recalled how these tenants in her parents' house came to feel like extended family, socialising with them at weekends and looking after

the children while the parents worked. One man paid his aunt \$12 per week for rent, which she generously saved to give him when he moved out.

The sheer hard work was not easy. One interviewee's parents worked seven days a week with the aim of saving enough money to buy a house. For the same reason, they walked to work to avoid paying tram fares.



Peter Menidis at a party in his early years in Melbourne, mid 1960s. (Source: Menidis family)

HOPES FOR LIFE IN AUSTRALIA



Peter and Sophia Menidis outside their first share house in Malvern after their marriage in 1967. (Source: Menidis family)

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE



A photograph from the 1930s depicting a group of Greek migrants playing pool.
Greek Archives (1930). *Greek Migrants Playing Pool, 1930s. La Trobe. Physical object.* <https://doi.org/10.26181/618dbbe38e91e>



A 1939 photograph of Nakis Raftopoulos outside his family-owned fruit shop the Mildura Fruit Palace at 250 Johnston Street, Abbotsford.
Greek Archives (1939). *Nakis Raftopoulos in Abbotsford, 1939. La Trobe. Physical object.* <https://doi.org/10.26181/612edf76e95f8>

Why Melbourne?

MELBOURNE, THE CAPITAL of Victoria, is a city with one of the largest Greek diaspora communities in the world, if not *the* largest. In the 2021 Australian census, Victoria had the largest number of people of Greek ancestry compared to other states: 181,184, of whom 46,623 were born in Greece.²⁹ Of these, 171,480 lived in Greater Melbourne.³⁰ One reason for Melbourne's large Greek population is the phenomenon of chain migration: a few migrants brought out others, with the number growing exponentially. (For example, one interviewee said that her father sponsored three sisters, two brothers and his parents to come to Melbourne.) In addition, Melbourne had a strong manufacturing industry which attracted migrants in the peak migration years. The religious and educational support structures established within the Melbourne Greek community also encouraged further migrants.³¹

Immigrants from Greece initially chose to live mainly in the inner city or inner suburbs, rather than in the outer suburbs or rural locations, and many local Greeks would rent rooms in their homes to new arrivals. This choice of location was related to employment opportunities and to a need and wish to live

near Greek friends and relatives, public transport, cultural supports (such as their church) and Greek food suppliers. In Melbourne, popular areas included around Lonsdale Street in the city, Northcote, Prahran, Richmond, Brunswick and Fitzroy.³² Port Melbourne was also popular as it was adjacent to Station Pier.



A photograph of the only Greek afternoon school in Melbourne in 1947. The photograph depicts the teachers and students celebrating the National Day of Greek Independence.

Greek Archives (2021). Greek school in Melbourne, 1947. La Trobe. Physical object.

<https://doi.org/10.26181/610b29836dbf9>

Employment and business

TYPICAL OCCUPATIONS FOR the earliest Greek migrants to Australia were in hospitality and retail (mainly food). For owners of cafes and food businesses, the family could live on the premises and work together, and no formal skills were required.

One of the earliest cafes known as 'oyster bars' in Melbourne, the London Café and Oyster Saloon in Elizabeth Street, was opened in around 1910. Its owners were Andreas Alexandratos who had arrived from Ithaca in 1901, and his brothers George and John. It 'reputedly became one of the most fashionable catering establishments in the city'.³³ During the 1920s and 30s, Greeks opened and operated cafes in the American style, inspired by their own or relatives' experiences in the US. Some also opened cinemas. These businesses were bases from which to employ and train relatives, friends and compatriots who were newly arrived in Australia and who would later typically branch out on their own.

After World War II, many Greek immigrants on assisted passages commenced their life in Australia at Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre outside Wodonga. Under the Assisted Migration Scheme immigrants were required to be in employment 'as directed' for two years, and if they declined official employment offers, they might lose their eligibility for social service benefits.³⁴ Commonwealth Employment Officers at Bonegilla directed labour to where it was most needed in Australia: for example, cane cutting, agricultural work, bridge building and timber felling. One interviewee spoke of a female relative who was assigned to cane cutting in Queensland. She hated the work because it was hot and very difficult, and there were snakes in the cane. She cried a lot and wrote to her parents to say that she wanted to leave.

For newly arrived Greeks, family and friends often recommended work related to their own employment. Manufacturing was popular with many Greeks because of the opportunities to earn production bonuses and take on additional shifts, although the work was arduous and dangerous.

The 1961 census returns showed there was a high concentration of Greeks in manufacturing occupations and under-representation in high status jobs.³⁵

Factory work also had the social advantage that many co-workers spoke the same language, although this could militate against becoming fluent in English. For women, garment construction was a common occupation as it built upon their needlework skills learned in Greece.

All in all, their early years of employment in Australia often entailed arduous and unsatisfying work for Greece-born immigrants, whether government-sponsored or not:

The fifties and sixties, when so many of the Greeks arrived, was a period when it was possible to work hard, to save, to gradually improve one's accommodation and to accumulate some of the trappings of a high standard of living. At the same time it was for many Greeks a period characterised by long hours of unpleasant and physically demanding work, of both parents working and of a feeling of being looked down upon by many of the Australian-born.³⁶



Stamatis and Con Xanthos outside Andrew Jackomos' Magpie fish-and-chip-shop in Collingwood in 1932. Greek Archives (1932). Magpie fish-and-chip-shop in Collingwood, 1932.

La Trobe. Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/612ee4166c958>



A photograph from the 1920s depicting Greek migrant workers of a tobacco factory in Perth. Greek Archives (2021). Greek migrant workers in tobacco factory, 1920s. La Trobe. Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/610b29ab14290>

The Greek Orthodox Church

EARLY GREEK IMMIGRANTS were active in establishing the cultural framework for their lives in Australia:

The Greek population in Melbourne was working to build what was probably the most comprehensive network of ethnic institutions to be found in any ethnic group in Australia. Greek Orthodox churches, community schools, regional associations, sporting clubs, theatres, dance halls and restaurants opened in large numbers, making it possible for those who chose to live out almost every aspect of their life in a Greek environment to do so.³⁷

The Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria was established in 1897, following a planning meeting at the shop of a Greek resident of Melbourne. In 1898, the first resident Greek priest arrived in Victoria.³⁸ As later occurred in Oakleigh, the first buildings used for church services were local halls or churches of other Christian denominations which the Greek congregation decorated with ecclesiastic items for services. The foundation stone for the first Greek

Orthodox church in Victoria, The Annunciation of Our Lady in Victoria Parade, East Melbourne, was laid in December 1900, well before the major waves of migration from Greece.³⁹

In 1924, a Greek Orthodox diocese was established in Australia and the first bishop was appointed. Following the large post-war immigration of Greeks from the 1950s, the status of the diocese was upgraded to archdiocese in 1959.



A group of Greek migrants from the island of Ithaca photographed with their children after church mass at the home of Angelos Lekatsas. The photo was taken in the autumn of 1931.

Greek Archives (1931). Fathers with their children after church mass, 1931. La Trobe.

Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/612edf5db1df8>

Welfare

IN THE MID-20TH century, the Australian community was deficient in providing adequate support for immigrants, both practically and in their aspirations to maintain their cultural identities.⁴⁰ A growing concern for the Melbourne Greek community in the 1960s was the education for their children in inner suburban schools, and they identified a need to train more Greek-speaking teachers.

In February 1972, as a by-product of the efforts to establish a Chair of Modern Greek Studies at the University of Melbourne, the Greek Professionals' Association was established. One of its sub-committees became the Australian Greek Welfare Society (AGWS), of which a visionary leader was Dr Spiro Moraitis. Dr Moraitis was a Melbourne general practitioner who saw an urgent need to address the many migrant problems.⁴¹

The aim of the AGWS, as stated in August 1972, was:

to lobby for the rights of migrants and their children and improve services particularly in the areas of education, health, welfare, child care and family services.⁴²

After six months of providing services through volunteers, the AGWS received a grant of \$10,000 from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs to fund a social worker.⁴³

By the 1990s, the AGWS was proud of its achievements as an 'ethno-specific' organisation working effectively with mainstream services. It did, however, identify the increasing need for culturally appropriate aged care facilities and for more bilingual teaching and programs.



Members of the AHEPA organisation. The photograph was taken at The Australian Hotel in 1942. Greek Archives (1942). AHEPA Melbourne, 1942. La Trobe. Physical object. <https://doi.org/10.26181/616f6a729f99b>. The Australasian Hellenic Educational Progressive Association was established in Australia in 1934, with the aims of preserving Hellenic culture and of raising funds for charities, particularly for medical research and for welfare for those in need.

The most recent wave of migration

A NEW WAVE of migration to Australia from Greece occurred in the decade between 2010 and 2020.⁴⁴

Greece has been experiencing a severe economic crisis since 2010, widely reported in the media. The consequences of the worsening financial situation in Greece have impacted gravely on the quality of life, social and health and well-being of those living in Greece. More alarmingly, it is reported that increased unemployment is leading to increased poverty, degradation of working conditions as well as increases in children and young people experiencing depression and anxiety ...⁴⁵

This crisis in Greece led to hundreds of thousands of well-educated Greeks leaving their country. Some of these had family and friends in Australia, particularly Victoria, who assisted with their resettlement there:

With such a large number of people of Greek descent living in Victoria it is not a surprise that more than half of those arriving now in Victoria have had some connection with Victoria ... They were either Australian citizens or Australian permanent residents

of Greek descent who had returned to settle in Greece or were the children of Australian citizens of Greek descent currently residing in Greece ...⁴⁶

Others came to Victoria without knowing anyone but in desperation and hope for better opportunities.⁴⁷

A report by the Australian Greek Welfare Society in 2014 analysed the increased number of arrivals from Greece to Victoria since 2010.⁴⁸ Many were young people seeking better economic opportunities.⁴⁹ The OECD estimated youth unemployment in Greece as being close to 60% in 2013.⁵⁰

The AGWS report provides a table showing the total number of Greek and Cypriot residents arriving in Victoria at this time.⁵¹ In 2009–10 the total was 404. One year later, the total was 550 and in 2012–13, the total was 1,909. Many of these arrivals entered on short-term tourist visas but may have been hoping to stay in Victoria long-term or at least until the economic situation in Greece improved.

Before this new wave of migration, a major welfare focus for the Greek community in Melbourne had been issues pertaining to earlier Greek migrants, who were now ageing. The Australian census of 2011 showed that the median age of Greece-born residents was sixty-seven years⁵² (compared to thirty-seven years for Australians overall⁵³). With the increased arrivals from Greece from 2010, some of whom were in dire financial straits, the AGWS reorganised its services to identify and respond to their needs as well.⁵⁴

THE MOST RECENT WAVE OF MIGRATION

In mid-2018, Greece received its final loan from European creditors, completing a bailout program which had begun in 2015, and its economy returned to growth with decreased unemployment. In 2023, Greece was one of Europe's fastest growing economies.⁵⁵

PART TWO

Oakleigh,
Melbourne

THIS SUMMARY OF the history of Oakleigh draws upon the work by H.G. Gobbi, *Taking Its Place: A History of Oakleigh Marking Its Sesquicentenary 1853–2003*, published in 2004.

Until the early 1800s, the area that is now Oakleigh was bushland, the traditional custodians of which were the Boon wurrung and Woi wurrung people of the Kulin nation. As their lands were close to the early European settlements, they were either quickly removed (many to a reserve at Mordialloc) or their numbers were whittled away through disease and other impacts of white contact.⁵⁶

From the earliest days of European settlement in Victoria, Oakleigh was a stopover for coaches, bullock wagons and stockmen travelling between Gippsland and Melbourne. Hotels and relevant trades developed in Oakleigh to serve these travellers. Most of the early landholders were from England and Scotland (hence ‘Scotchman’s Creek’). The colonial government wished to formalise the area and following an official survey in 1853, the Parish of Mulgrave was created. Oakleigh was the principal town, located in its south-west corner. The original township of Oakleigh lay along both the north and south sides of what is now Dandenong Road but was initially called Broadwood Street and The Broadway, mainly between Warrigal Road and Atkinson Street.

When the railway came to Oakleigh in 1877, the precinct between Atherton Road and Portman Street developed as the main commercial area. Around 1882, the Chair of

Commissioners for the Victorian Railways remarked that Oakleigh was poised to become a grand railway hub, like Crewe in England. This led to a boom of land sales around Oakleigh with a number of streets named after English railway stations (for example, Crewe, Paddington, Euston, Swindon), perhaps to perpetuate expectations of Oakleigh's importance.⁵⁷



Ploughing near Waverley Road Oakleigh 1910. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

In 1913, the City of Oakleigh was successful in its application to annex the area bounded by Dandenong, Warrigal, North and Poath Roads, previously in the City of Caulfield.⁵⁸ Oakleigh developed rapidly after the First World War, partly because the electrification of the suburban railway system in

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE



Junction Hotel on left, looking east along Portman Street, Oakleigh, 1922.

(Source: History Monash Inc.)



The Broadway, Oakleigh, early twentieth century. Former ES&A bank on far left.

(Source: History Monash Inc.)

1922 decreased the travel time from Oakleigh to Melbourne's CBD. Hughesdale Station was opened in 1925 and residential streets and shops quickly developed around it.⁵⁹

A further impetus to post-World War I housing development in the area was the State Savings Bank home loan scheme for low-income earners.

A new Oakleigh Council Chambers building was opened in Atherton Road in 1921 and a new post office next door at 3 Atherton Road in 1924. By 1922, there were over one thousand students at Oakleigh State School. The area around Atkinson Street became a medical precinct with several private hospitals.

After World War II, a population boom and influx of migrants saw Oakleigh grow again. New settlers came from a wide variety of European countries, including Italy and Greece, as can be seen in the list of names from naturalisation (that is, citizenship) ceremonies. Oakleigh's population increased from 14,000 in 1914 to 25,000 in 1955.⁶⁰ In the 1960s, major developments in the area included Chadstone Shopping Centre (1960), the opening of Monash University (1961), and the building of the overpass over the railway line in Warrigal Road (1968).⁶¹ In the mid-1990s, Hughesdale was formalised as the place name for the area west of Warrigal Road as far as Poath Road. The City of Oakleigh was absorbed into the City of Monash (1994) in a general restructure of Victoria's local government areas.⁶²



Meeting at Mechanics Institute, Drummond Street Oakleigh, 1920. (Source: Donated to History Monash Inc. by Lorna Paterson.) This hall is now used by the Kariatides Oakleigh Greek Women's Group and others.



Bradford Real Estate, Station Street Oakleigh, circa 1920s. Station Street was the location of several Greek businesses from the 1950s. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

PART THREE

Greek settlement
in Oakleigh

Why Oakleigh?

OAKLEIGH IS OFTEN described as the heartland of Melbourne's Greek community. The City of Monash was in 2021 the local government area in Victoria with the largest number of people of Greek ancestry: 13,221, which was 6.9 per cent of its population.⁶³ Oakleigh had the highest proportion of people with Greek ancestry in the City of Monash: 16.3 per cent.⁶⁴ (This was the third most predominant ancestry in Oakleigh, after English and Australian.) Greek was the main language used at home other than English, spoken by thirteen per cent of Oakleigh's population. This compares with 1.6 per cent who used Greek at home in Victoria and 0.9 per cent in Australia.⁶⁵

In the early days of Greek migration to Melbourne, however, most new arrivals had lived in inner city areas. The original epicentre of Greek culture was Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, with its Greek cafes, patisseries, travel agencies and other businesses. The Greek Cultural Centre in Lonsdale Street was established in 1959 after the purchase of a hotel there by the Greek Orthodox Community. Bill Batzogiannis, one

of the owners of an iconic Lonsdale Street Greek patisserie, International Cakes (To Διεθνές) which opened in 1969, said in September 2024:

Most of the Greeks, thousands that is, were born here, across the road, at Queen Victoria Hospital⁶⁶ ... I loved this place from the first moment because of its Greek element. It was like being back home. Greece was here! ... [In those days] you'd only hear Greek spoken, inside the shop and out ... The Greeks, a lot of them still single then, lived around here. They were our daily customers and they became our friends ... They seemed to gravitate here, because it was their shop ... a place for Greeks.⁶⁷

Batzogiannis said that in the 1990s, Greek businesses (fifty to sixty, he estimated) started to leave the city centre.⁶⁸ This was partly because city rents increased and because their Greek customers moved out into the suburbs to live.⁶⁹ Jorge Menidis (older son of Peter and Sophia Menidis), the current president of the Greek Precinct Association of Lonsdale Street, confirmed that much of the Greek diaspora shifted from the city to Oakleigh.⁷⁰ Other suburbs, of course, were also settled by Greek migrants.

The inner city residential areas were characterised by small blocks of land and small, older houses. Many of the migrant families longed for bigger, more modern houses and blocks of land on which to grow the produce which they missed from their homeland, including olive, lemon and other fruit trees, vegetables and herbs. Oakleigh, whose market gardens were

being sub-divided into residential use,⁷¹ offered relatively affordable blocks of residential land, typically of around 600 to 700 square metres. The possibility of building or buying a modern brick house was very appealing, although some families were happy to buy established Edwardian and California Bungalow houses. One interviewee remembered looking for a house in other suburbs but finding that Oakleigh was more affordable on their one income.

One woman spoke of her family moving from Prahran to Oakleigh East in 1973 because other Greeks were relocating there from the inner suburbs. Her family was able to buy a house on a quarter-acre block for \$23,000 and was very attracted to the possibility of having enough land for growing vegetables and around ten fruit trees, for rotating their crops and being able to keep a rooster, chickens and rabbits.

Oakleigh, fourteen kilometres from Melbourne's CBD, was also well-placed along the railway line for work close to the city and in the south-east. Metalworks and machinery, vehicle and other manufacturers moved into Oakleigh itself. There were also industrial employment opportunities in nearby Huntingdale, Clayton and Dandenong, for example. Advertisements for work in local industries were plentiful in the *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, including positions at General Motors Holden (GMH) in Dandenong, Bosch in Clayton, Knitting Mills (Ormond), Coats Paton (Mount Waverley), Patons Brakes (Moorabbin), the Oakleigh abattoirs, Australian

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE

Plaster Industries (Oakleigh), Volkswagen (Clayton), Astor (TV factory at Clayton) and a new telephone cables factory in Clayton (in 1964) which would employ two hundred people.



Aerial view of Oakleigh industrial areas in 1954. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

One interviewee remembered that his uncle and aunt had moved from Brunswick in the late 1960s when their employer, a textile threads factory in that suburb, had relocated to Oakleigh. The employer guaranteed the jobs of any employees willing to work at the new location. This factory was one of several which encouraged their workers to move with them to the outer suburbs where production could expand.

General Motors-Holden moved its new body and vehicle assembly plant from its Fisherman's Bend site to 153 acres in Dandenong in 1956, where it employed many migrant workers. It reportedly posted employment officers on the migrant ships to Australia to sign up prospective workers.⁷² The Heinz factory moved from its Richmond site to facilitate increased production. Its new factory in Dandenong opened in 1955 and it particularly employed a large number of migrant women on a part-time basis. There were around 1,300 employees at this factory.⁷³ International Harvester was another large company to build on a site in Dandenong. It opened its factory on 56 acres in 1952, employing 500 workers and with the capacity to produce 3,000 trucks in that year. Many employees were migrants from the Doveton Housing Estate.⁷⁴



Former Australian Plaster Industries Ltd factory, boiler house and chimney, 61 Westminster Street Oakleigh. 2025. This relic is now on the Victorian Heritage Database #86541. The citation notes that it was built in 1946–48 and doubled in size in 1958, and that 'It also reflects the transition of industrial development from the inner suburbs to newer suburbs such as Oakleigh, where land was cheaper, and there was a growing residential population to provide the workforce required.'
(Photo: Ann Nield, 2025)



Oakleigh industrial area 2025. (Photo: Ann Nield)

Greek residents of Oakleigh

SANDS & MCDOUGALL postal directories provide evidence of the increasing number of Greek residents in Oakleigh. These annual directories (published between 1860 and 1974) listed the businesses and residents of houses in all streets in Melbourne suburbs and country areas.⁷⁵ For this study, the directories have been used to identify the number of Greek names in all Oakleigh streets.⁷⁶ Names below are spelled as in the directories and each name in many cases represented a family.

In the 1953 edition of Sands & McDougall, there were approximately seven Greek names.⁷⁷ Apart from one, six operated businesses in Oakleigh, where it is most likely that they lived on the premises, as was common at the time:

Name	Address	Occupation
Raftopoulos, Leartis	Burlington Street	
Photios, S	Kevin Street	farmer

Name	Address	Occupation
Kostos, D	Waverley Road	stud poultry farm
Gounas, P	24 Atherton Road	leathergoods
Apostol & Lolas	42 Portman Street	fishmonger
Kallinekas, J	26 Station Street	fishmonger
Varlamos, C	5 Willesden Road	fishmonger

In the 1965 edition of Sands & McDougall, there were approximately thirty-seven Greek names shown as residing in Oakleigh.

The following eight have not been included in the residential count of thirty-seven but could well have lived on the premises and thus also have been Oakleigh residents:

Name	Address	Occupation
Gounas, C	24 Atherton Road	leathergoods
Kafouris, J	1360 Dandenong Road	grocer
Apostolou, A	322 Huntingdale Road	fishmonger
Fokos, F	246 Huntingdale Road	delicatessen
Gountras & Kiraxhs	244a Huntingdale Road	fishmonger
Chanakas, S & P	32 Station Street	fishmonger
Miriklis, M & sons	176 Warrigal Road	fishmonger
Varlamos, C	5 Willesden Road	fishmonger

GREEK RESIDENTS OF OAKLEIGH

In the 1974 edition of Sands & McDougall, there were approximately 275 Greek names, plus the following 15 business owners, who may have lived on the premises:

Name	Address	Occupation
Christodoulo, J & F	83 Atherton Road	confectioners
Demetrios, –	45 Chester Street	take away foods
Olympic Driving School	24 Eaton Street	(probably Greek-owned)
Tsagaris, D & M	280a Huntingdale Road	milk bar
Rouvalis, W	2b Portman Street	boot repair
Charakas, S & P	32 Station Street	fishmonger
Marinatos, P	11 Station Street	fruiterer
Zafinopoulos, J & F	23 Station Street	delicatessen
Kokkinos, M	35 Station Street	snack bar
Griticos, P & M	140 Warrigal Road	confectioners
Manangoudakis, L	146 Warrigal Road	milk bar
Katavolos, G	53 Warrigal Road	second-hand dealer
Hronopoulos, D	97 Warrigal Road	fruiterer
Aivaliotis, S	101 Warrigal Road	milk bar
Christopoulos, N	213 Warrigal Road	confectioner

In summary, the increase in three decades was significant:

Year	Residents listed in S&D (many representing whole families)	Business owners (possibly also residents) in S&D	Total in S&D
1953	1	6	7
1965	37	8	45
1974	275	15	290

Settling in and building the Greek community in Oakleigh

EVER SINCE THE earliest days of migration, Greeks have given a helping hand to newly arrived compatriots. All of those interviewed for this Oakleigh study spoke of contacts from their village or town, or relatives, who had arranged to meet them at the wharf or airport, who had directed them to housing and jobs and who had given them social contacts. In linking new arrivals with other migrants, the church and cafes also played an important role.

Most first generation interviewees said how difficult it was to leave their families in Greece. Promises were made: to send financial support, to support other siblings who would come, to return and see relatives. Nonetheless, homesickness would remain a challenge for many years, particularly if times were tough, there were language barriers or when the

wider community was unwelcoming or discriminatory. One female interviewee spoke of dreaming of her village nightly. Many migrants did not know if they would ever again see their families at home due to the cost and time involved in trips back to Greece. Sophia Kontonatsis (later Menidis), who had migrated as a young single woman from north-western Greece in the 1960s, wrote poems to express her sadness and homesickness. She kept photo albums to record her new life and wrote in her first photo album soon after arrival in Australia: 'Even if I cross many rivers and seas, I will never forget my beautiful homeland ...'



Photo album of Sophia Kontonatsis, later Menidis. (Source: Menidis family)

Letters were the main form of communication with home because phone calls were expensive and difficult to arrange. One woman remembers standing as a child outside a public telephone box in Oakleigh in the winter cold. Her parents were ringing an office on their home island – one of the few places there with a phone – to make an appointment to speak to their family at a certain time. The next day the Oakleigh family rang again and spoke to their family for a few minutes, while their coins dropped too quickly into the phone.

Most of those interviewed or described by their children met their future spouses after they arrived in Australia. The birth of children and the strength of friendships eventually helped to ameliorate the homesickness, to the point that many migrants relinquished their plans to return permanently to Greece. Others still planned to return to Greece permanently but, upon assessing that life was still tough there, returned to Australia.

Friends helped new arrivals to settle in. For the single men, it was not uncommon for married women in their share house to cook their meals and provide lunch for them to take to work. After moving to Oakleigh as married couples, interviewees often visited friends' homes with their children, each taking one dish and beer, where they would talk and dance. They and their friends could not afford restaurants in those days.

Another interviewee said that there were four types of entertainment in the early days after migration: going to the

Astor Theatre because it was a Greek cinema, visiting other people's houses, church on Sundays before going home to watch television, and the Brotherhoods.



*Double Greek wedding at Saints Anargiri Greek Orthodox Church, 1980.
Mr and Mrs Marios Pratsis and Mr and Mrs Christos Mingidis. Standard Times,
23 January 1980. (Source: History Monash Inc.)*

Many migrants understandably wished to associate with others from their home areas. Numerous informal and more formal groupings arose, including the Brotherhoods which were linked to particular parts of Greece and designed for friendship and socialising, sharing news of one's birthplace

and mutual support in times of need. Depending upon the number of members, Brotherhoods raised funds and supported the education of their members' families. One interviewee's uncle's Brotherhood raised enough money to pay off his mortgage for his wife after he died. Some of the Brotherhoods, including at least two in Oakleigh, purchased properties where they could meet. The Panargoliki Philanthropic Brotherhood in Oakleigh, known as 'To Palamidi' also supports commemoration of Lemnos' link to Gallipoli and Australia's Anzac story.⁷⁸

Facility with the English language made a difference to the migrant's ability to settle. For one woman, taking basic English classes helped somewhat, but working in a largely migrant environment did not develop these skills further, and this made her feel frightened about living in Australia.

Dr. Georgina Tsolidis has written about the various stages in which the Greek community establishes itself in a new country, which is reflective of the Oakleigh experience:

The embryonic Greek community first establishes its church which may display the Greek national flag. Next to the church is a room in which the children learn the Greek language, history, dances and the scriptures; possibly in that order. As the community establishes itself the organisations evolve: the club rooms, women's groups, welfare organisations, political organisations and professional groups. There may be a Greek-language press, Greek theatre groups, Greek day schools and Greek homes for the elderly. A distinct Greek presence in mainstream

organisations such as (in Australia) the Scouts, the RSL (Returned Services League), the ALP (Australian Labor Party) and the Freemasons may evolve ... In a city like Melbourne, particularly in some suburbs, there are clear indications of the Greek presence. This goes beyond the shop fronts and the languages heard spoken on the streets. Festivals, cultural events and community institutions which celebrate Australian Ellenismos⁷⁹ are also celebrations of new cultural forms.⁸⁰

Greek migrants to Australia were determined that their children would be able to speak Greek, not only so that they could communicate with their grandparents and relatives who had more limited English skills but also to maintain their Hellenic identity and ties to their Greek community. A *Standard Times (Oakleigh)* article in February 1973, 'Language of the Heroes', featured the Greek after-school classes held at Oakleigh Primary School organised by Father Moutafis (see following section). He was quoted as saying, 'Bilingual citizens should be more tolerant and understanding and so be able to offer more to society'.⁸¹ The course had been running for nine years and there were now twelve schools offering such classes, with around eight hundred children participating. More teachers were needed to meet the demand, and Father Moutafis said that the Greek Government and the Greek community had both made substantial donations towards a Chair of Modern Greek at the University of Melbourne, which would then help to produce qualified teachers of Modern Greek.⁸²

SETTLING IN AND BUILDING THE GREEK COMMUNITY



The christening of Natasha Menidis at Saints Anargiri Church in the 1970s: Peter and Sophia Menidis with baby Natasha and son Jorge. Natasha is a teacher at Oakleigh Primary School and Jorge is the President of the Greek Precinct Association of Lonsdale Street.

(Source: Menidis family)



*Peter (L) and Sophia (R) Menidis at the celebration of their daughter Natasha's christening at their home, 1970s, featuring a home-cooked feast.
(Source: Menidis family)*

One typical interviewee attended lessons at Greek school held at Chadstone High School after her standard school hours at East Oakleigh Primary School. She and many of her fellow students at Greek school regarded it as punishment which exacerbated the cultural divide between them and other children. At that time, fitting in was not easy. Many interviewees spoke of the feeling of not being accepted at school or other institutions.

The early Greek settlers in Oakleigh, despite their adaptations while settling in, worked hard to retain their culture and traditions. Saints' Days, religious festivals, weddings and christenings, and important Greek national days such 25 March (Greek Independence Day) and 28 October (Oxi Day) were and still are occasions for celebrations.

The Glendi (meaning 'celebration') has become a popular Oakleigh annual public event, drawing together the Greek and other multicultural communities and the general population in two days of festivities.⁸³ A collaboration between the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the City of Monash and the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District, it attracts thousands of people over two days in November and features Greek singing, dancing, food and other community activities. The event is held in Warrawee Park, Oakleigh, and it is a 'spectacular celebration of cultural diversity with a special focus on Greek heritage'.⁸⁴



*Sign advertising 2024 Glendi outside Oakleigh Grammar School.
(Photo: Ann Nield, 2024)*

The Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District

IN THE EARLY 1960s, Greek settlers in Oakleigh were already considering how to establish a local Greek Orthodox community. (The Annunciation of Our Lady church in East Melbourne had been the only Greek church in Melbourne until 1950.)⁸⁵ Several of the Oakleigh women who were very devout said that they ‘could live without bread but not without the church.’⁸⁶ They were travelling across Melbourne to attend church services and were particularly determined that there should be a local church and school. A committee was formed which included Andreas Provataris, Athanasios (Arthur) Rovolidis, Nikitas Stavrinidis, Dimitrios (Jim) Zafiroopoulos, Constantine Papadopoulos and Vasilios (Bill) Pateras.⁸⁷ A few months later in 1964, Constantine Baltas, only twenty-four years of age, also joined the Committee. Con had arrived in Australia in that year and moved directly to Oakleigh. His involvement continued until 2003: he was Secretary of

the Greek Orthodox Community from 1970 until 1987 and President from 1987 until 2003.⁸⁸

Citing the growth of the Greek population in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, these Greek community representatives in Oakleigh asked the Melbourne Greek Orthodox Archdiocese to create a local Greek Orthodox Community. This request was granted, and the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District Inc. was formed on 18 December 1963. It included the suburbs of Oakleigh, Clayton, Springvale, Bentleigh, Murrumbeena, Carnegie, East Malvern, Chadstone, Burwood, Ashwood and Waverley. Archbishop Ezekiel gave permission for the establishment of this separate Greek Orthodox community with 'the immediate objective of establishing a School for your children and furthermore the establishing of a Church ...'⁸⁹ The first parish priest of the resulting church and school was Father Nicholas Moutafis, who served in this capacity from 1964 until his death in 2001.

Church services for the new Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District were initially held in the Mechanics Institute in Drummond Street which the community hired from the City of Oakleigh. Members of the congregation would bring all the items needed for the service, set them up and take them down afterwards, as well as clean the hall. At times, the community also used Holy Trinity Anglican church on the corner of Dandenong and Warrigal Roads.

The cost of building a church would be huge and so the committee commenced fundraising in earnest. Almost every Saturday night, there was a function which the committee organised, such as a souvlaki night or a taverna night. People donated food and drinks, particularly those who ran food businesses, such as butchers. The money raised from tickets to these events went entirely to the church fund. One of the women, Anna Zoidis, was legendary for her tireless fundraising (for example, selling event tickets outside the Oakleigh railway station) and she was honoured by the church leadership in Constantinople for this. Parishioners and Father Moutafis undertook a great deal of physical work, such as digging foundations, to save on costs. Members of the Greek community were asked to lend money to the project. Others contributed prizes for raffles, donated building materials and skills, undertook translations, provided legal and real estate advice and made many other contributions. The Greek women in the community were of vital assistance in many ways. People in the wider Oakleigh community also were supportive, including local politicians.

The community firstly bought an old house at 81 Willesden Road, Oakleigh, which served as the church for one year. (This site eventually became the community hall.) In 1967, the community built a small church in Clapham Road, Oakleigh, after demolishing the original house on the block.

After three years, this church was too small for the congregation, and so the community commenced planning and fundraising for a church big enough to hold several hundred people. Neighbouring properties needed to be bought so that enough land was available. (In all, twenty-eight old houses in the vicinity were bought to demolish for the church and school.) This achievement was particularly impressive when one notes that all the complex negotiations with banks, councils and politicians had to be done in English, which was not the first language of the committee members.



Saints Anargiri Greek Orthodox Church Oakleigh, front. (Photo: Ann Nield, 2024)



*Saints Anargiri Greek Orthodox Church, western side,
Clapham Road. (Photo: Ann Nield, 2024)*

The foundation stone for the present Saints Anargiri Church was laid in 1971, and this church was officially opened on 14 October 1973.

Local press reported that the opening of the church was attended by an estimated 7,000 to 8,000 people.⁹⁰ It praised the sacrifices made by parishioners:

The new church, despite its excellence, was not built by people with an excess of money. Many of the parishioners have heavy commitments to family and housing, having begun with nothing, less than ten years ago. There have been donations not just of money, but of time and talents, outside of working hours. An example is a man who painstakingly placed thousands of mosaic tiles around fourteen external columns.

The foundation plaque on the church states:

St. Anargyroi
War Memorial Church
In memory of our beloved brothers
Australians and Greeks who gave
Their lives for our freedom on the
Battlefields of Greece and Crete
During the Second World War.

Founded on 14.10.73

By his Eminence
Archbishop Ezekiel.



*Opening of the new community hall with Senator James Webster (left centre),
Bishop Aristarhos (third from right), Father Nicholas Moutafis (second from right).
Standard Times (Oakleigh) 12 July 1978, p. 5. (Source: History Monash Inc.)*

THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

In July 1978, a huge crowd attended the opening of the new Community Hall in Willesden Road with a service in the recently opened Greek Orthodox Church led by the bishop of the Melbourne diocese, Bishop Aristarhos. Official guests included the Greek Consul-General and the Federal Minister for Science and the Environment, Victorian Senator James Webster.



Visit to the Greek Orthodox Community Centre by the Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Greece, Mr Andrianopoulos (centre), with Community President

Mr Mousias (left) and Fr Moutafis (right) and boy in Greek costume.

Standard Times 19 Dec 1979. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

Senator Webster congratulated the Greek community on building a fine church and now the large hall. Father Moutafis urged the audience to continue working ‘for the progress of the area of Oakleigh and the parish’. He said that the parish also planned to build an aged care centre and a parish welfare office. Donations were then given from the audience for this next project.⁹¹

In 1986, fourteen special housing units were built near the church to house elderly citizens. Then in 2019, the Greek Orthodox Community bought thirteen additional units in Paddington Road (closer to Neerim Road) from Anglican Aged Care.⁹²

The community was shocked when, on 10 December 2022, a fire broke out in Saints Anargiri church, causing major damage. Until this building was repaired, church services were held in the conference centre of Oakleigh Grammar School.

Then on 18 November 2024, a fire broke out in the bell tower of the church after thieves stole from a power station the copper cables that supply power to the Oakleigh area. Fortunately, the damage was not major. According to the *Greek Herald*, the church was working hard to restore electricity quickly and ‘The church doors remain open, symbolising the community’s resilience and strength during this challenging time.’⁹³

Religious traditions have always been central to the Oakleigh Greek community. One of its members has childhood memories of the many church services during Holy Week, the fasting, the red eggs being boiled, cakes and breads baked and the preparations for families gathering on Easter Sunday. She remembers, as a child in Oakleigh, seeing live lambs in backyards and the next day, the lambs would be hanging in the garage in preparation for the festivities to come.

In the early years, women would collect greens (*ta Χόρτα*) from empty paddocks or roadsides in the area to add to the feasts. The days before Greek Easter are still exceptionally busy for Oakleigh shops, with streams of men leaving butcher shops with a lamb or kid carcass over their shoulder.



*Easter signs at Limnos Butcher,
Portman Street, Oakleigh, 2025.*

(Photo: Ann Nield)

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE



*Lamb for Easter Sunday, 2025, in Portman Street, Oakleigh on
Easter Saturday. (Photo: Ann Nield)*



Women of the church community after decorating the epitaphio with flowers on Easter Friday. In accordance with tradition, women and children, young and old, gather in the morning and are guided in the decorating by the more experienced women.



Easter Friday. Father Stavros holds a burgundy velvet cloth above his head. This cloth has a gold embroidered image of Christ lying in the tomb and will be placed on the epitaphio (tomb of Christ). To the left are the altar boys who accompanied Fr Stavros in the procession in the church.

This photo and the photo on the previous page taken at Saints Anargiri Church, Easter, 2025. (Photos and captions: Stephanie Moutafis)



*L: Easter eggs, 2025, ready for boiling with leaves attached
which will make the patterns on the shells*

R: Eggs after being boiled in brown onion skins (rather than red dye)

(Photos: Stephanie Moutafis, Oakleigh & District Greek Orthodox Community)



*Home baked tsoureki
(Easter bread), Easter,
2025. (Photo: Stephanie
Moutafis)*

Father Nicholas Moutafis

Father Moutafis was the much-revered parish priest at Saints Anargiri from 1964 and a pivotal force in building the Greek community in Oakleigh and surrounds. Nicholas Moutafis was born in Crete and migrated with his parents and siblings to Australia at the age of eighteen. His family had courageously helped an Australian serviceman, Private Charles Elphick, to hide during the German occupation of Crete in World War II. If the German soldiers had known that the young Moutafis boys were taking food to 'Charlie', the family would have faced severe retribution. One day, Charlie disappeared from his hiding place and the Moutafis family hoped that he had escaped. Unfortunately he had been captured and he spent around four years in German POW camps.⁹⁴ Charlie, in gratitude for their brave assistance, wrote to the Moutafis family after the war and offered to sponsor them to migrate to Australia, which they accepted. Nicholas' father Ioannis migrated in 1949, and the family followed in 1950. Nicholas' parents were an example of charity to others, as they helped many needy young Greek women migrants.

Nicholas firstly worked in his father's cafe in Hawthorn while attending and chanting at the Greek Orthodox Church in East Melbourne, where he met his future wife, Evangelia. Evangelia had grown up in a village in Crete where, during the war, she and the villagers experienced real hunger during the German and Italian occupation. Evangelia and her father migrated to Australia in 1952 when she was seventeen.

THE GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY



Nicholas Moutafis, waiter. (Source: Stephanie Moutafis)

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE



As a young priest. (Source: Stephanie Moutafis)



Father Moutafis as an older priest. (Source: Stephanie Moutafis)

Nicholas and Evangelia shared a house in Hawthorn with other families in the early days of their marriage. They went on to have six children. Nicholas became a deacon in the Greek Orthodox Church in 1958 and was ordained in 1959.

After service in Newcastle, Father Moutafis served at Saints Anargiri, Oakleigh, from 1964 until his death in 2001. He worked tirelessly towards building the church, the community centre and the school. He had the gift of connecting with people and built up a big youth group, helped to build the aged care units for elderly people in the Greek community and supported afternoon Greek language school.

Father Moutafis always honoured the sacrifices of Australian soldiers and brave Cretans in World War II through personally supporting the Battle of Crete commemorations. (His attempts to contact and thank Charlie, the Australian serviceman, via a newspaper article, led to one of Charlie's friends advising that Charlie had already passed away.) Father Moutafis received several significant awards for his community service.

Father Moutafis developed cohesion and cultural strength within the Greek community, but he also reached out to the wider Oakleigh community and to political leaders. At Easter, when the local police supported the church in clearing the local Oakleigh streets for the procession of the *epitaphios* on the Friday night, the Moutafis family would prepare a platter of Greek biscuits to take to the police station in gratitude.

After the death of Father Moutafis in 2001, many people in the Greek community wished to recognise his dedication and untiring work for others. Via funding from the Victorian Multicultural Commission, the City of Monash and the Greek community, a bust of Father Moutafis was erected in Atherton Road near the Monash Federation Centre.

Searching for Charlie

by FELICITY DARGAN

AS an eight-year-old in Crete, Nicholas Moutafis used to give food to an Australian soldier being harboured by his family after escaping from a prisoner-of-war camp.

Now a priest at the Greek Orthodox Church in Oakleigh, Fr Moutafis remembers searching every day to see "Charlie", who was hiding under bushes on a river bank.

Then, one day, several months later, Charlie was gone.

The Moutafis family was reunited with the World War II veteran in Australia after they immigrated in the early 1950s. But since then, they have heard nothing about the digger.

Fr Moutafis has now embarked on a campaign to find Charlie, who he thinks would be about 85.

The Battle of Crete began on May 20, 1941, as German paratroopers invaded the Mediterranean island.

While the memories are dim, Fr Moutafis, a father of six and grandfather of ten from Mt Waverley, speaks warmly of the man his family risked their lives to help.

"All the civilians helped the Allied soldiers who escaped from the concentration camp and tried to flee to the Middle East," he says.

"I took food to Charlie with my brother Dimitris, who was five. We went unnoticed by the enemy.

"Sometimes Charlie would



On a mission: Father Nicholas Moutafis is looking for a WWII digger he met as a child in Crete. Picture: JASON SAMMON / NewsPics

have been captured and sent to a POW camp in Germany. My father had worked in Australia from 1924 to 1928 and knew a little English so he would talk to Charlie.

"Then one morning we went to see Charlie because and he was gone. We thought he had made it to the Middle East."

The Moutafis family never knew Charlie's name.

In the early 1950s, Mr Moutafis wrote to

the Australian government to say he had been captured and sent to a POW camp in Germany.

After the war, he returned to Australia and wrote from Melbourne to suggest the Greek family migrate. He enclosed a photo of himself and wrote on the back: "Regards, Charlie".

"In 1952, Charlie met my parents and brother in South Melbourne but I was working,"

Fr Moutafis said.

"I have now learned he later

Australian engineers in 2/2 Field Park Co, R.A.E. Mr Ashton wrote: "I am AL from the picture that is of Charlie. We were in Crete in the Middle East including Greece. Our unit, which was about 180 men, got separated, I was injured at Larissa and eventually escaped to Crete as a walko

on a British hospital ship from Crete to Alexandria. After the war at a unit get together, I met Charlie who had got married. My wife and I met he and his wife a few times socially.

"I have no knowledge of Charlie's whereabouts. He, of course, may not be living."

Another man who recognised the photo was Blackburn resident John Holden, who also served with the Royal Australian Engineers.

"Mr Holden told me Charlie had returned to the construction camp in Crete before being sent to Germany," Fr Moutafis said.

"He said Charlie told him he didn't want to cause problems for my family and ended up or lives so went back to the island of Crete in respect to the stability of the man."

Warrant officer Peter Adam from the Army, is investigating Charlie's whereabouts for Fr Moutafis, who would love to

"I want to find out about Charlie's life and share memories with him," the priest said. "Hopefully he can also tell us stories about our family. That's

'Searching for Charlie', Waverley Gazette, 4 November 1997.

Photographer Jason Sammon/NewsPix.



The bust of Father Moutafis in Atherton Road, Oakleigh 2025. (Photo: Ann Nield)



Inscription at the base of the bust of Father Moutafis. 2025. (Photo: Ann Nield)

The Oakleigh Greek Orthodox College of Saints Anargiri/ Oakleigh Grammar School

FROM THE EARLY 1960s, the Oakleigh Greek community aspired to establish a school for their children which supported their language, culture and religion. Various sites in Oakleigh were considered for the school, but it was regarded as essential that it be close to their church. A huge effort in fundraising and planning was directed towards building the school, including the purchase of old houses which could be demolished for the site. This culminated in the 1983 opening of the Oakleigh Greek Orthodox College in Clapham Road opposite the church. Many members of the Greek community were at that stage sending their children to government schools or to the Catholic Sacred Heart Girls College in Oakleigh. Those planning the new school therefore

also took on the difficult challenge of persuading members of their community to move their children to it.

For the first year of the school, when it was not supported by government funding, the committee estimated that the operating costs would be beyond their current resources. Father Moutafis came to the rescue, negotiating with the Melbourne Greek Orthodox Church hierarchy for an interest-free loan for one year. Even so, in the first year the classrooms were located in the old houses which had been gutted ready for demolition. Portable classrooms were brought in for the second year and used while the new school was built around them. The early church in Clapham Road was also used for classrooms. The number of students doubled in the second year.⁹⁵

The senior school was the first permanent part of the school to be built, in 1989. A Junior School building was completed with Federal Government assistance in 1994, and an Early Learning Centre was established on land adjoining the school in Clapham Road in 1999. Over the years, further buildings have been added, such as a library, administration building, sports complex, multipurpose hall, and an arts/graphics wing.



HIS Grace Bishop Ezekiel leads the procession from Oakleigh Greek Orthodox church to Sts Anargiri College.

Picture: VALERIU CAMPAN

A sacred celebration

PEOPLE turned out in droves last Sunday to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Greek Orthodox community in Oakleigh.

To mark the occasion a new wing of the Oakleigh Greek Orthodox College Sts. Anargiri was opened with the right to cut

the tape being auctioned to the highest bidder.

The celebrations, presided over by his Grace Bishop Ezekiel, began with a service at the Oakleigh Greek Orthodox church in Willesden Rd.

The procession then wound its way to Sts Anargiri College where

the new wing was opened.

Guests included Oakleigh Mayor Cr Denise McGill, federal Minister for Primary Industries and Energy Mr Simon Crean, federal Opposition spokesman for Education Dr David Kemp and Oakleigh MLA Mr Race Mathews.

Opening of a new wing of the Saints Anargiri College in 1991, with Federal Minister Simon Crean (top left). Oakleigh-Springvale Times,

10 July 1991, p. 8. Photographer Valeriu Campan/Newspix

Oakleigh Monash Leader

Inquiries 9584 8400 Classifieds 9875 8000

50c Incl. GST MONDAY, MARCH 24, 2003

Source of a city's culture

MOST people get a cake, some people get a crown, but Oakleigh will celebrate its birthday with a cavalcade of colour and community celebration. Dancing, eating, music-making and history-reading at Oakleigh's Our Beginnings festival on March 30 will set the mood for the 150th anniversary of the naming of the township. ■ Report - Page 7.

Oakleigh Greek Orthodox College students Irene and Sophie prepare for the Our Beginnings festival.
Picture: RENAE DROOP NDISC194



Oakleigh Monash Leader, 24 March 2003, p. 1. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

As part of the celebrations for the 150th anniversary of Oakleigh in 2003 (Oakleigh's 'Our Beginnings Festival'), students from the Oakleigh Greek Orthodox College presented traditional Greek dances.⁹⁶ Their inclusion in the program demonstrated the centrality of the school to the Oakleigh community.

The school was renamed Oakleigh Grammar School in 2011 and it was accredited as an International Baccalaureate World

School in June 2015.⁹⁷ In the early days, the school primarily catered for the educational, cultural and religious needs of children of Greek descent. Since 2011, however, the school has had a broader focus. Its vision is to be a 'leading co-educational school that provides quality education at an international standard' while its ethos is that 'Our School is founded in and inspired by Orthodox Christianity and Hellenic language and heritage.'⁹⁸ It offers the International Baccalaureate as well as the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). Tuition is given in English but Modern Greek Language classes are provided from Prep to Year 12.⁹⁹

Oakleigh Grammar celebrated its 40th anniversary and the 60th anniversary of the Saints Anargiri Church in 2023 by opening the NP Nikolakakis Centre for Academic Excellence.

Apart from Father Moutafis, one of the several outstanding individuals who made the dream of a school a reality was Constantine Baltas, who was awarded an Honorary Presidency of the Greek Orthodox Community in 2003.¹⁰⁰ As noted by Anna Burke, MHR, Federal Member for Chisholm in 2004:

The Greek community in Oakleigh is one of the few in Australia which can boast its own school, and much of this achievement would not have been possible without the work of Con ... In his capacity as a volunteer Con has gone beyond the call of duty: working all hours ... This has ensured the strong growth and prosperity of the Greek orthodox community in Oakleigh.¹⁰¹

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE



*Top: Oakleigh Grammar School front entrance.
Below: View from Willesden Road. (Photos: Ann Nield, 2024)*

Employment and business

MOST OF THOSE who arrived as migrants in Melbourne lost no time in starting work in earnest. One interviewee's parents arrived on a Friday and commenced work the following Monday, subsequently working seven days a week. An interviewee who came to Australia as an assisted migrant was sent from Bonegilla Reception and Training Centre to arduous jobs such as bridge building and timber cutting. A female migrant who had been a seamstress in Greece worked initially with a bridal dressmaker, then at a men's tailor in Melbourne. After ten years in this work, she and her husband bought a milk bar.

Another interviewee, although not an assisted migrant, undertook hard physical work as a timber cutter in eastern Victoria. This work over two years gave him the financial basis to buy a business, but this business also involved many hours of hard work.

Former migrants spoke of financial insecurity in their early years. One who worked on building sites remembered the uncertainty of work and the loss of pay if you were sick or injured. Two interviewees experienced devastating accidents at work where there were poor safety procedures. One lost two fingers and was critically ill as a result of the accident, and another sustained serious back injuries which led to unemployment. Such employment conditions were a strong incentive to start one's own business.



Peter Menidis, who settled in Oakleigh, eventually established his own building company. (Photo: Menidis family)

As seen in the Sands & McDougall directories, by 1965, several Greek-run businesses were operating in Oakleigh. For example, in February 1963, Jack Miriklis advertised the opening of his seafood business at 47 Atherton Road with an advertisement in the *Standard Times*.¹⁰² Jack's father, Michael Miriklis, had migrated to Australia from Kastellorizo in the 1920s, along with many other Kastellorizians. The islanders' income was traditionally derived from fishing and maritime trading around the Mediterranean Sea because the island sustained little vegetation. After running a seafood shop in Elsternwick, Michael Miriklis had indulged his preference for a somewhat more rural environment and 'gone bush' according to the family, opening a seafood business at 176 Warrigal Road, Oakleigh by 1957.

His son Jack's children were born at the hospital in Palmer Street, Oakleigh and attended Oakleigh Primary School. Jack's new business in Atherton Road was, according to his son, Michael Jnr, an experiment because Jack was unsure about the future prosperity of the area. At that time, he says, there were quite a few empty shops in Atherton Road. In the event,



the Atherton Road business lasted only a year but during this time, Jack was known for giving his customers slices of cheese from big blocks which he bought at the city markets along with the fish and rabbits. The Warrigal Road business continued with Jack's children helping their grandfather, Michael Snr, to run it. Rather appropriately, until recently, it was the site of the Oakleigh Aquarium shop.

Jack Miriklis turned his focus towards the Melbourne wholesale fish markets, as well as to buying fishing vessels. He became an auctioneer at the markets and Jack Miriklis Pty Ltd remains a leading wholesaler at the Melbourne Seafood Centre market today.¹⁰³



Until at least the 1980s, advertisements for Greek businesses in the local, free English-language newspapers were not common. Even in early 1983, the restaurant advertisements in the *Standard Times* do not include any Greek cuisine in the Oakleigh area. Greek businesses predominantly advertised in the Greek-language newspapers such as *Ta Nea*,¹⁰⁴ *Neos Kosmos*¹⁰⁵ and *Nea Patrida*.¹⁰⁶

In September 1984, however, a burst of publicity accompanied the opening by the Kapiris brothers of the Oakleigh indoor market, purportedly the first business of its kind in Oakleigh.¹⁰⁷ The then Federal member for Henty, Joan Child, said that the 'development fitted in well with plans of the State

Government and Oakleigh Council for the redevelopment of the shopping centre and Oakleigh railyards. The market was officially opened by Ms Child after blessings by Greek Orthodox priests.

New produce market opening

THE Kapiris Brothers claim they will be bringing Oakleigh shoppers the most up-to-date fruit and vegie shopping in the country when their new market opens at the end of the month.

The Kapiris family has spent about \$2 million renovating the Oakleigh market and expects it to be finished by then.

Drivers wanted

OAKLEIGH Council's meals on wheels service is in desperate need of more drivers to help deliver meals to the city's elderly and infirm.

Meals on wheels coordinator Mrs Bernadette Leggett said last week the service "could do with three drivers and two drivers immediately."

Anyone interested in the community service work can contact Mrs Meggitt by phoning her at the council

The new market has access to both Portman and Chester Sts, and the Kapiris family is proud of it.

"It will be the biggest and best set-up in Melbourne," Mr Harry Kapiris said last week.

One of the features of the market will be an automatic fruit and vegetable dispenser which refills trays of produce as customers make their choice.

"It's the most modern sort of machine there is," Mr Kapiris said.

"There is only one other in Australia.

"Our machine will do it all automatically without bruising any fruit or vegetables."

But although technology is making the fruiterer's life a little easier, produce still has to be brought into the store.

Usually there's a forklift to lift a pallet of carrots or whatever has arrived.

But sometimes the old fashioned method of gripping a bag with bare



HARRY Kapiris (left) and brother Nick outside the new Oakleigh market Portman St. entrance last week.

WOB

Standard Times (Oakleigh), 19 September 1984, p. 13. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

Buying a home close to their work and to compatriots was important to the Greek migrants. When moving from the inner city to the Oakleigh area, it was natural that home buyers would look for a real estate agent whom they could communicate easily with and trust. In response to this need, Jim Lazogas opened Lazogas Real Estate Pty Ltd in Atherton Road, Oakleigh in 1978. One interviewee said that all the

Greek families went to Jim when buying houses and land in Oakleigh.

Jim Lazogas had migrated to Australia in 1955 from a village near Kozani in northern Greece, looking for new opportunities after Greece's devastation in World War II. He was sponsored by his brother Nick, and the brothers spent two years cutting timber in Licola in the high country of eastern Victoria. With their savings from this work, they bought a fish and chips shop in Balwyn, then after five years moved into the Greek cinema business. Jim was a frequent visitor to Oakleigh, to see his brother who had set up a business there and to attend the Greek Orthodox Church. In approximately 1972, Jim moved into the real estate industry, initially working for an agency in Caulfield. By this time, he was living in South Oakleigh where he had bought a house. He then joined an agency operating out of Station Street in Oakleigh and became well known among the Greek community. Around 1978, Jim established Lazogas Real Estate Pty Ltd, first at 20 Atherton Road and now at 16–18 Atherton Road. Jim's was then the only Greek-owned real estate business in Oakleigh. His initial staff of three people grew quickly and now numbers twenty-four people.

Lazogas Real Estate mostly sold established houses but also sold market gardens and industrial land. Big sales included the current McDonald's site on the corner of Centre and Warrigal roads, land in country Victoria, and most of the houses acquired for the Hanover Street carpark in the late 1980s.¹⁰⁸

EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS



Top: Jim's earliest shopfront at 20 Atherton Road Oakleigh. (Source: Jim Lazogas)

Below: Lazogas Real Estate Pty Ltd, 16-18 Atherton Road, in 2024. (Photo: Ann Nield, 2024)

NEOS KOSMOS 26/11/92 SAT.

JIM LAZOGAS & CO. P/L.
18 ATHERTON RD., OAKLEIGH, 3166

(Διάτο στο γραφείο του
SOCIAL SECURITY)

Τηλ.: 568 4033
LICENCED ESTATE AGENT.
AUCTIONEERS, MEMBER REIV.
A.H. Jim 587 5343
A.H. 570 5371
ἡ αυτοκ. 018 318 395

OAKLEIGH CENTRAL
54 PORTMAN ST.

AUCTION

**DELICATESSEN
MUST BE SOLD**
Owners have told us sell us now. Tkg \$11,000 p/w. Well known business Springvale. 5½ days. Owners here 13 yrs. Be in for Xmas profits. Illness forces sale.
\$95,000 SAV
TALK TO US TO MAKE AN
OFFER

DELICATESSEN
Buy in time for Xmas profits. Tkg \$18,000 p/w. 6½ days. Northcote area. Excel. rent, lease and equipment.
Our vendors will negotiate.
\$147,000 SAV
Contact Bernie

JIM LAZOGAS
18 Atherton Rd, Oakleigh
568 4033 AH 870 2471

SEAFORD
Centre Rd, Seaford
S.W. Price \$63,500/12
3 bed, 2 bath, 2 car, 5th St
Taking \$1,500 p/w. W. rent, good locn.
2 bed, 1 bath, 2 car, 5th St
Taking \$1,500 p/w. W. rent, good locn.
\$68,500

CONTACT: BERNIE:
JIM LAZOGAS & CO. P.L. REIV
18 Atherton Rd, Oakleigh
568 4033 AH 870 2471

SANDWICH BAR/COFFEE LINC
51 Hawthorn Rd, Hawthorn,
Hawthorn area, designer decor.
Enjoy making money and living
cheaply. Excellent location.
PRICE \$83,000 SAV

SANDWICH BAR/COFFEE LINC
City fringe. Designer decor. This
well known business is now for
sale. Price \$100,000. SAV. Last 12 months
turnover \$40,000 p/w. PRICE \$75,000.
CONTACT: BERNIE

JIM LAZOGAS
18 ATHERTON RD, OAKLEIGH
568 4033 AH 870 2471

COFFEE LOUNGE/F.A.F.
51 Hawthorn Rd, Hawthorn area, designer decor.
Enjoy making money and living
cheaply. Excellent location.
PRICE \$63,000 SAV
CONTACT: BERNIE

JIM LAZOGAS
18 Atherton Rd, Oakleigh
568 4033 AH 870 2471

ICECREAM SE SUB \$55,000
Excessive equiv. Early run.
Contact: Bernie
JIM LAZOGAS & CO. P.L. REIV
18 Atherton Rd, Oakleigh
568 4033 AH 870 2471

*Collage of 1992 advertisements, Lazogas Real Estate Pty Ltd,
including from Neos Kosmos. (Source: Jim Lazogas)*

As well as being a central figure in Oakleigh real estate, Jim contributed energetically and generously to the local community. He joined the Rotary Club of Oakleigh in the mid-1980s, of which he is still a member, and he became a Justice of the Peace. He also was central to the efforts to build the Greek school, including through fundraising and assisting with acquiring land for the school, for which he was honoured by the Greek Orthodox Community.

Jim Lazogas has been a significant contributor to the development of Oakleigh and to the advancement of the Greek community.

EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS



ROTARY CLUB OF OAKLEIGH -1992

Back Row: W. Okely, J. Duggan, J. Hall, J. Jarvis, N. Gardiner, I. Phelan, D. Tuckwell, A. Foster, S. Piccone, C. Gounas, D. Damergou, E. Young, D. Lazogas
 Centre Row: C. Fiori, J. Gleeson, D. Petrie, G. Hitchman, A. James, G. Luxford, P. Norman, J. Workman, J. Dight, I. James, P. Winell, A. Rugg, M. Brownlee.
 Seated: A. Kiely, K. Phelan, R. Adams, S. Richards (President), B. McDonald, P. deVries, B. Dunlop.
 Absent: N. Blakely, F. Martin, K. Porter, T. Sheer.

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Rotary Club of Oakleigh 1992. Jim Lazogas far right, top row. (Source: Jim Lazogas)



By the 2000s, there were many more people of Greek descent working for the various real estate agencies in Oakleigh. Greek businesspeople also moved into local business networks. Con Gounas was the President of the Rotary Club of Oakleigh in 1984.¹⁰⁹

Bank takes you to Greece

CUSTOMERS at the ANZ bank in Oakleigh could be forgiven for thinking they'd walked into the wrong building.

The usually quiet and bland interior of the building was festooned with Greek flags, posters and artifacts, and the staff dressed in traditional Greek costumes.

Customers were also serenaded by Greek music and served Ouzo, Metaxa, brandy and sweets.

It was all part of the bank's special promotion for its travel awareness week.

Each ANZ bank in the Waverley area picked an overseas theme and dressed up their banks and staff accordingly.

The Greek decorations at the Oakleigh bank were provided by the Springvale Greek community.



Bank staff in Greek dress (from left) John Henderson, Ingrid Strik, Debbie Burden, Maria Papandoni, Fiona Weir and Kathy Muts.

No. 705

New alarm system for school

HUNTINGDALE Technical School will have a new \$32,000 alarm system installed to try to cut back on the heavy costs of vandalism in the last two years.

The school estimates that acts of vandalism have cost over \$20,000.

Mr Race Mathews, MLA for Oakleigh, said this was an appalling setback for the school.

"It's good that the

government has acted now to safeguard the school and its assets," Mr Mathews said.

The new security system will cover both levels of the building. The previous system covered only the upper levels.

The network detects the presence of an intruder in the school, then transmits the information to the central system.

A regional security officer can then be at the school within a few minutes.

Standard Times (Oakleigh), 29 February 1984 p. 4. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

By 1968, the State Savings Bank of Victoria had initiated a campaign to win a greater share of business from the increasing number of Greek migrants. It was recruiting 'roving ambassadors for the bank in the Greek community' as well as interpreters to work in branches in districts with a high level of Greek migrants.¹¹⁰ The Oakleigh State Savings Bank announced in June 1977 that it was conducting a migrant advisory service at 32 Eaton Street.¹¹¹ John Carydias at the bank said that branch officers spoke a range of languages, including Greek, Italian and Turkish.

The Oakleigh branch of the ANZ Bank was trying to woo Greek as well as other customers when it featured a special promotion for its travel services in February 1984. The bank was decorated with Greek flags, posters and artefacts, with the staff dressed in traditional Greek costumes. Greek music played in the bank, which offered customers ouzo, Metaxa brandy and Greek sweets.¹¹²

New faces at store

THERE are two new faces at the Oakleigh Produce Store.

Bill and Skye Zafriopoulos took over the long-running business in August this year and now offer a wide range of livestock, feed, plants, and garden products.

A variety of birds including quails, chickens and canaries are available as well as bird cages,

feeders and seed.

Well-known names such as Completo and Coprice are available to keep horses happy and dry dog food can be purchased in bulk.

The Oakleigh Produce Store is open from 7.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday, and from 7.30am to 2pm Saturdays.

The business is located at 103 Warrigal Rd, Oakleigh. For more information, phone 568 0419.



BILL and Skye Zafriopoulos — new faces at the Oakleigh Produce Store.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

OAKLEIGH PRODUCE STORE



BARASTOCK ANIMAL FEED

BIRDS & CAGES

GARDEN PRODUCTS

CHRISTMAS SPECIAL

15% OFF FEEDERS

103 WARRIGAL ROAD

CORNER KANGAROO RD.

OAKLEIGH Phone 568 0419

SPECIALISING IN AUTOMATIC INCUBATORS
SPECIALISING IN SEEDLINGS & PESTS



Oakleigh-Springvale Times, 12 December 1990, p. 13. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

The proliferation of fruit and vegetable gardens in backyards, often with chickens and other animals, resulted in a need for products to feed and maintain these. The Oakleigh Produce

Store on the corner of Warrigal and Kangaroo roads is a long-established business which is still in operation. The Zafiropoulos family took over this business in December 1990.

Greek culture was firmly embedded in Oakleigh's retail offerings by 1992, with the Oakleigh Central shopping centre promoting both Western and Orthodox Easters. An article in the local newspaper explained the origins and meaning of Greek Easter.

Page 28 — OAKLEIGH-SPRINGVALE TIMES, Wednesday, April 8, 1992

All the Eggs-hilaration of a real Greek Easter April 20-24

The origins of Easter

WHILE there seems to be little logic or order to the variable date of Easter each year, there is a determining factor and a historical explanation that predetermines the most important date in the Christian calendar.

For three centuries following the death of Christ, Easter and the Eastern churches disagreed over when Easter should be observed.

The council of Nicaea, called by Constantine the Great in Asia Minor in AD 325 settled the matter. Easter was made a movable feast scheduled to fall on the first Sunday after the full moon that follows March 21.

If the full moon rises on a Sunday, Easter falls on the next Sunday. Therefore Easter always falls after March 22 but before April 25.

It was Constantine the Great who also decreed that the cross be made a symbol of Christian religion.

While in this part of the southern hemisphere Easter is an autumn event, the name derives from the pre-Christian celebration of the start of spring. Northern Europeans would pay homage to "Eostre", the goddess of light and spring, with a festival that celebrated the death of winter.

In the 18th century the "poetic name" Easter was coined by the English and used for the celebration of Christ's resurrection.

Christians around the world today observe this important festival in a variety of ways.

In Greece, traditions include the tapping together of eggs as an Easter game when people meet. And on Good Friday, a ceremony called Epitaphios or burial of Christ, takes place.

Four men carry a bier containing a wooden figure of Christ. The rest of the congregation forms a funeral procession.

The procession returns to the church, where a priest blesses the candles and flowers and distributes them to the congregation. On Easter Monday, the Greeks dress in their traditional costumes and enjoy music and dancing.

The Greek Orthodox Church's Easter co-incides with that of other Christian churches on only very four occasions to be observed above one week later. Family gatherings are an integral part of Easter Sunday for the Greek Orthodox Church. After attending a church service in the morning, families gather together for a lunch that might include a spit roast, and special Easter cakes and breads.

Christians in many parts of the world celebrate before the Easter season with carnivals, masquerades and feasts. These celebrations can reach a peak of gaiety (as in the Pancake) Tuesday more than six weeks before Easter.

On Ash Wednesday, the day after Shrove Tuesday, many Christians start a solemn 40-day period of fast or denial, known as Lent. It recalls Christ's 40-day fast in the wilderness.

The last week of Lent, called Holy Week, honors the last week of Christ's life on earth. It begins on Palm Sunday, named for the palms that people spread before Jesus as He entered Jerusalem in triumph.

The week ends with the crucifixion of Jesus on Good Friday, the day of Christ's crucifixion, in a sombre manner, and spend Holy Saturday in anticipation of the resurrection.

On Easter Sunday, millions of Christians in all parts of the world unite in their feelings of joy in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Early Christians of Mesopotamia were the first to use colored eggs for Easter. In

GETTING into the spirit of Easter decorations are students from Oak North Primary School, from left, Kate Browne, 8, Zuchariah Shen, Adrian Yarzabal, 11, Kirsty Mellor, 8, and Nicolas Logarzo, 9.

'Eggs'tra Easter fun

EASTER celebrations will last one week longer than usual at Oak North Primary School this year.

From April 15 to 24, traders will participate in an Easter Food Festival, which will also celebrate the Greek Orthodox Church's festival.

The Greek Orthodox Church celebrates Easter from April 15 to 25 this year. The Easter Food Festival will comprise special demonstrations, cooking demonstrations, and food and wine tastings. Traders taking part in the festival include supermarket, Cut Price Deli, Oakleigh Central Fruit Shop, Station Seaford Natural, Crystal Poultry, Tenderfresh Meats and Lite 'n' Tasty.

During this period, Traders Talk Back will operate in the Center Court. The jockey has been booked and in between track dinners will be kept up to date.



Oakleigh-Springvale Times, 8 April 1992, p. 28. (Source: History Monash Inc.)



Music helps to define and maintain culture, and Greek music can be heard in many Oakleigh cafes and shops throughout the day. Posters around Eaton Mall advertise the visits of Greek performing artists, the Glendi festival features prominent singers from Greece; and the Oakleigh Music Centre in Chester Street sells Greek music CDs and DVDs. Greek language radio stations also cater to the Greek community.

Chris Babatsias and his son George established Rythmos Greek digital radio station in 2011. Its studio was initially located in Dorcas Street, South Melbourne, alongside other radio stations, but it now operates from the Babatsias' shopfront in Poath Road, Hughesdale. Available through an app, it is also found at rythmos.com.au, and it includes podcasts.

Chris's aim for the radio station was that it would support the community, especially the new wave of Greek migrants escaping the economic crisis in Greece from 2010. He targeted eighteen to fifty-year old listeners and thought that the radio would help give the new arrivals a link back to their homeland. Rythmos was also a way for businesses to advertise for workers and for the new Greek arrivals to find work.

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE



Oakleigh Music Centre, Chester Street Oakleigh. (Photo: Ann Nield, 2025)

Welfare in the Oakleigh Greek community

THE GREEK ORTHODOX Church of Oakleigh and District provided pastoral care and practical assistance to its parishioners. As well, other organisations emerged to support members of the Greek community.

Chadstone Community Health Centre

An early State Government initiative in migrant welfare was the Chadstone Community Health Centre in Poath Road. In July 1977, the *Standard Times* announced that the staff at this centre included Helen Andriotis who spoke Greek.¹¹³ George Lekakis, a future Chair of the Victorian Multicultural Commission, joined the staff there in 1980 and responded to a range of social issues, including health, family relationships, mental health, single mother support and funerals for needy people of Greek descent. He worked closely with Father

Moutafis, who would often accompany him on visits to troubled families.

Pronia

Pronia (Greek for ‘care, welfare, providence’) is a service organisation operated by the Australian Greek Welfare Society. Although its head office is in Brunswick, Melbourne, it has a busy second office in Oakleigh. Its vision is ‘to be a leading Australian–Greek community services agency in Australia’.

Pronia provides welfare services to the Australian–Greek community across the lifespan of its clients, including child care, aged care, relationships support, mental health support, domestic violence support and disability services via the NDIS. Pronia also undertakes advocacy, policy development and research.

Pronia has been formally offering settlement services to newly arrived Greek migrants since 2012.¹¹⁴ These services include referrals to relevant organisations, crisis intervention and financial support, housing assistance, communication and employment help, migration and legal assistance and work readiness programs. During the wave of Greek migration from 2010 following the Greek economic crisis, Pronia worked collaboratively with other organisations to provide Greek language-specific support services. Some of the new

arrivals who settled in Oakleigh found employment in the Greek hospitality businesses there. Other Greek–Australian companies helped through providing work placements. There was a need for places for the children at local schools, and the community was able to help facilitate this.



Pronia moved to a larger shopfront in Portman Street, Oakleigh in May 2025. (Photo: Ann Nield, 2025)

Some of these ‘new wave’ migrants became ‘vulnerable clients’ of Pronia during the COVID pandemic. Being ineligible for Australian social security benefits, some had difficulty in affording food and rent. Assisted by Red Cross funding, Pronia was able to support these clients.

Other services in the Oakleigh area currently provided by Pronia include Greek Family Storytime which teaches pre-schoolers to speak Greek (funded by the Victorian Government) and Digital Literacy Sessions for Greek-speaking seniors at the Oakleigh Library (funded by Monash Community Grants and led by Pronia's Community Educator).

Fronditha Care

Fronditha (Greek for 'concern, care') Care is a not-for-profit organisation providing a range of aged care services. It was established in 1977 by members of the Greek community in Melbourne led by Dr Spiro Moraitis, who foresaw that in the coming years a large number of the original Greek migrants would need assistance in their day-to-day living. Ideally, they would be supported in an aged care setting which recognised and valued their culture and language. Many of the elderly were more comfortable using their mother tongue and felt isolated and depressed in mainstream aged care facilities.

These forward-thinking leaders established the Australian Greek Society for the Care of the Elderly (AGSCE), which was the forerunner of Fronditha Care. They firstly undertook a study into the ageing Greek community (AGSCE Submission March 1978) and then highlighted the gap between their elderly community's needs and the mainstream aged care options available at the time. The Fraser Federal Government, whose social policies were supportive of multiculturalism,

promised in 1979 to provide \$2 in funding for every \$1 raised by the AGSCE towards building a culturally appropriate residential aged care home. The project was challenging due to its cost and the bureaucratic obstacles at the local level.

Eventually, enough money was raised to build a forty-bed hostel for elderly people of Greek heritage. The City of Oakleigh granted a 1.34 acre (half-hectare) block of land in a residential area in South Clayton with a planning permit for the hostel. The development was, however, blocked by neighbours in a successful petition to the Planning Appeals Tribunal, and so another site had to be found. In 1981, the City of Oakleigh granted AGSCE \$100,000 to purchase a different site: 2.5 acres (approx. 1 hectare) at 94 Springs Road, Clayton South. AGSCE paid \$132,000 for the site and in 1982, the former Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, a staunch Philhellene, led an opening ceremony on the site. This became the first hostel for the Greek elderly in Melbourne and was finished in 1983. A specialised nursing home called STEYI (meaning 'shelter') was built a few years later, also in Springs Road, Clayton South.

AGSCE struggled, however, to find sufficient Greek-speaking nurses and carers. To address this, it provided special language programs for the non-Greek speaking staff and it sponsored nursing training for people of Greek descent. Fronditha Care also recruited staff in Greece in 2014 under a special visa arrangement with the Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection. Fronditha Care now also offers care

for elderly people of other ethnicities, with centres in several other locations.

Unveiling a Greek first

THE first Greek nursing home in Victoria was formally opened by Governor General Bill Hayden on Sunday, June 30.

The 30-bed nursing home, called "Steyi" (meaning shelter) at Springs Rd, Clayton South, was built with funds donated by the public and government grants.

Although anyone can apply for residence, director of nursing Miss Joan Livingston said the home was geared to the Greek community and its needs.

"We have had people here who aren't Greek, but it didn't really work out and they end up feeling isolated," she said.

All ancillary and domestic staff are Greek, and the non-Greek nursing staff have

Greek lessons twice a week.

Miss Livingston said it was important for residents to feel comfortable with their environment.

"People who are elderly, or who suffer from dementia, become very frustrated and withdrawn when they can't communicate their needs," she said.

"The Greek community is quite different to the Anglo-Saxons in that they thrive on social interaction and physical contact."

Greek food and religion were also an important part of life in the home, she said.

Miss Livingston, who has worked in a number of nursing homes, said she often marvelled at the vitality of the Greek residents.

— KERRI ELGAR



GOVERNOR General Bill Hayden opens Victoria's first Greek nursing home, accompanied by, from left, Primary Industries and Energy Minister Mr Simon Crean, Mrs Dallas Hayden and Jacob Frontistas, president of the Australian Greek Society for Care of the Elderly.

Bus route changes

CHANGES to Springvale bus services will be introduced on September 2.

The changes follow a review of local services by the Public Transport Corporation and

the Bus Proprietors Association.

Changes were to be introduced from July 1 but reorganisation of timetables and rosters is expected to take two months.

The opening ceremony for the STEYI nursing home. Governor-General Bill Hayden (far right), MHR for Hotham Mr Simon Crean (left), Mrs Dallas Hayden (2nd from left) and Mr Jacob Frontistas, President of AGSCE (2nd from right), Oakleigh-Springvale Times, 10 July 1991, p. 7. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

Politics

ACCORDING TO ACADEMIC Dr Georgina Tsolidis, the Greek idea about Hellenism ‘is a vision which connects the old and the new through language, culture and religion, and also through a love of politics, education, the arts and understandings of civic duty’.¹¹⁵ From the early years of post-war migration, Oakleigh residents of Greek descent have participated in the civic and political life of the wider community.

In April 1977, a Greek branch of the ALP was established in Clayton: the Clayton Central (Greek) Branch. A Greek-speaking branch of the Liberal Party (the second in Victoria) was established in Oakleigh South in 1990. Its first meeting was held on 12 December of that year with a young man, Petros Kosmopoulos, elected as President.¹¹⁶

People of Greek descent have been active in council politics since 1976, when Peter Katavolos of Oakleigh was elected to the Clayton Ward of the City of Oakleigh council. From that year, other councillors of the City of Oakleigh have included:

- 1980: Yiannis (John) Pyrgos
- 1982: Yiannis Pyrgos and John Salvaris

1984: Yiannis Pyrgos
1986: John Grezos
1988: John Grezos (Mayor in 1989).¹¹⁷



Cr John Pyrgos and Mr Race Matthews, then MLA for Oakleigh, 8 May 1983.
(Source: History Monash Inc.)

John Pyrgos was the Mayor of the City of Oakleigh in February 1983. He was said to be a foundation member of the Greek-speaking Hotham Central Branch of the ALP.¹¹⁸ Other Greeks contested local council elections. Notices for council elections in May 1984 were printed not only in English but also in Greek, Italian and Vietnamese.¹¹⁹

In 1994, as part of Victoria-wide changes to local government, the City of Oakleigh was incorporated into the larger City of Monash. Councillors of the City of Monash have included:

1997–2000:	Peter Vlahos (solicitor and first Mayor of the City of Monash, 1997–98)
2000–2003:	Peter Vlahos and Paul Klisaris
2003–2005:	Stephen Dimopoulos (Mayor 2004–05) and Vicki Bouziotis
2005–2008:	Paul Klisaris and Stephen Dimopoulos
2008–2012:	Paul Klisaris and Stephen Dimopoulos
2012–2016:	Paul Klisaris (Mayor 2013–14), Bill Pontikis and Theo Zographos
2016–2020:	Paul Klisaris (Mayor 2017–18) and Theo Zographos
2020–2024:	Paul Klisaris and Theo Zographos
2024–2028:	Paul Klisaris (Mayor 2024–25) ¹²⁰

At the time of writing, the State Member for Oakleigh is Steve Dimopoulos MLA, who is the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Minister for Environment and Minister for Outdoor Recreation. Steve attended the kindergarten at Oakleigh Baptist Church on Warrigal Road, then Hughesdale Primary School, Chadstone High School and Monash University. He has worked in the Oakleigh area since he was a teenager, including opening and running a business

in Atherton Road. He has been a Member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly since 2014.¹²¹ In his inaugural speech in the Victorian Legislative Assembly on 15 February 2015, Steve referred to the Hellenic character of his electorate:

The Oakleigh electorate is an articulate, strong, close-knit and culturally diverse community. It has unique retail and business centres, it is home to Australia's largest university and it is a key part of Melbourne's biggest employment cluster. Oakleigh is well known as the epicentre of Hellenic Australia. In fact, when Greek prime ministers and dignitaries plan trips to Australia, Oakleigh is specifically written into their itineraries. I am eternally proud of and grateful for two things: that I was born in Australia and that I can lay some small claim to a 5000-year Hellenic heritage, extraordinary in its scope and depth. I am proud to be the first member of Parliament of Greek heritage to represent the seat of Oakleigh in its 87 years.¹²²

At the Federal level, the seat of Chisholm, which at that time included parts of Oakleigh and Oakleigh East, was won for the Liberal Party in July 2016 by Julia Banks. Ms Banks' father, Sofoulis Lolatgis, came to Australia from Greece in 1949 at the age of fifteen. Ms Banks' mother, Helen (nee Malias), was born in Australia of Greek parents. Ms Banks MHR held the seat until November 2018.¹²³

POLITICS



*The Hon. Stephen Dimopoulos, MLA.
(Source: Office of Steve Dimopoulos, Jan 2025)*

Community organisations

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FOSTERS stronger social bonds and gives individuals a sense of belonging. For migrant groups it also helps with adapting to new environments, with overcoming adversity and with collectively addressing local needs. Visionary Greek-Australians in Oakleigh have devoted great effort to initiating and fostering sporting, social and other groups which have helped their community. The following are examples of several organisations which have connected people of diverse ages, interests and needs.

Kariatides Oakleigh Greek Women's Group

The Kariatides Oakleigh Greek Women's Group has been a source of friendship and mutual support for Greek women in Oakleigh for forty years. It began as an informal group in 1984, organised by Kathy Dimitriades and several other women.

Meetings were initially held in Kathy's garage, then the women met once per week in each other's houses, each bringing some food for lunch. As the numbers grew, the women realised that they needed a dedicated meeting room. One of them conveyed their needs to Peter (Panayiotis) Negropontis, who was the Oakleigh City Council migrant welfare officer from 1983, and he approached the Mayor on the group's behalf. (A Pronia employee, Ilias Tsinanis, is also said to have assisted the group.) The City of Oakleigh provided the upstairs area of the Mechanics' Institute to the group for their meetings on Tuesdays, then later the downstairs area with its big hall and its kitchen.



Greek dancing at a Kariatides meeting, undated. (Source: Voula Garth)

It became necessary to formalise the club and keep records as the numbers quickly grew to around sixty. Kathy Dimitriades was the first President and is credited with suggesting the name of the group, honouring the *Kariatides* who were in ancient times the women of Karyai who bravely defended their town in the Peloponnese from invaders. These women were immortalised in the statues supporting the roof of the Erechtheion on the Acropolis. The strength of the women of Karyai was an inspiration to these modern women of Oakleigh.



Kariatides excursion to Tulip Farm, 2012. (Source: Vicky Kafkakis)

The number of Kariatides members is now around 110. Meetings are still held on Tuesdays and members pay a small amount for lunch, the food for which is purchased, prepared and cooked by committee members. Meetings often include speakers on topics of relevance to the group, and members often undertake excursions to restaurants, movies, gardens, and other such places and organise walks and picnics.



*Steve Dimopoulos (future MLA for Oakleigh) at a Kariatides meeting,
August 2014. (Source: Vicky Kafkakis)*

Male partners are invited several times a year, for example, to cook a barbecue on Mother's Day or to attend a Christmas

party with carols and a feast. At the annual Glendi in Warrawee Park, the Kariatides often have a stand where they demonstrate how to cook a Greek dish.

The group has been successful in attracting grants from various levels of government and its members have won numerous awards for volunteering. They are very grateful for this recognition and official support. The committee has always worked extremely hard to organise events, to care for members and to liaise with local and other levels of government. Local politicians are invited to special events.

The Kariatides also offer hospitality to others, such as elderly citizens and people from other cultural groups, to build mutual understanding and respect. When their own members are in difficulties, financial assistance can be given. The group has been a huge support to women who have been homesick for Greece, who have lost a partner, who have no relatives in Melbourne and who for other reasons need the empathetic support of friends.

The group advertises its activities through Greek language newspapers, Greek radio, through the City of Monash Community Directory and word of mouth. They have often gained new members through the intervention of people who see benefit in their women relatives attending. Judging by the strong attendance at meetings, this group will continue to thrive well into the future.



Gyros lunch at the Kariatides, undated. (Source: Voula Garth)

Oakleigh Cannons Football Club

Chris Babatsias established the South Oakleigh Soccer Club as an outlet for the young Greek men who used to kick soccer balls in his neighbourhood around Davey Avenue, Oakleigh in the early 1970s. Chris approached the Football Federation of Australia (FFA) to find out how to start a team and to ask if he could register the name 'Oakleigh Soccer Club'. The FFA checked its records and found that an 'Oakleigh Soccer Club' had been previously registered but that it was defunct and

owed FFA more than \$5000. To use this name, Chris would need to pay the \$5000 to clear the debt. Chris felt downcast and explained that this was unaffordable. At a subsequent social event, an FFA executive suggested to Chris the name 'South Oakleigh Soccer Club' instead. This name was new, and it would only cost \$10 to register the team.

Chris Babatsias then asked the City of Oakleigh for the use of a playing field, and the club was allocated a piece of land behind the Oakleigh Motel in Dandenong Road. With the name and playing fields resolved in 1972, Chris went to the venue where the young men liked to socialise, Nick Alamaras' café on Warrigal Road, and announced, 'Boys, we're playing on Sunday!'



The Cannons in their early years, undated. (Source: Chris Babatsias)

Because they were a new team, South Oakleigh had to start in the lowest level of the league. Most of the other players in this level were factory employees, and this was regarded as an ‘industrial’ competition. In the early days, the team simply wore white T-shirts, because that is all they could afford. Chris eventually bought the players a proper kit in red, white and blue, which are the colours of the football club in Trikala, Greece, from which many of the original players and Chris migrated. (As the Cannons, their colours are now blue and white.)

South Oakleigh Soccer Club quickly became competitive, becoming champions of the Victorian District League East in 1973 and 1974. It was promoted through the divisions and won the Victorian State League Division 1 Championship in 1986, 1999 and 2003. Community interest in the team grew, and families would come to the matches and Friday night barbecue gatherings. According to George Babatsias, the weekends for club members would consist of soccer, a barbecue and a Greek dance on Saturdays and church on Sundays. People would get together in each other’s backyards – they didn’t go out to eat in the early days. The Saturday games would kick off at 3 pm, because the factories stopped work at 1 pm on that day. Greek spectators from outside Oakleigh would also come to the matches.

The team met socially at Nick Alamaras’ café and trained after work. FFA required them to have a committee, and

this was formed in Nick's café. The first President was John Dagiadas and the Vice-President was Jim Drakopoulos. Con Alaveras, the first Secretary of the club, was already very involved in Greek community cultural events. Their first coach was John Bayliss. Many club members were customers of Chris Babatsias at his service station, the only Greek 'servo' in Oakleigh, and this helped to publicise the club. The first junior team was formed in 1976.

The South Oakleigh Soccer Club played at the ground behind the Oakleigh Motel until 1978, when it moved to Keeley Park in Clayton South. It was not easy to find playing fields for soccer due to the wider community's limited interest in that game, and club members worked hard to set up facilities. From 1980 until 1985, they played at the King George Reserve in East Bentleigh, then Caloola Reserve in Drummond Street, Oakleigh became their home ground. Upon their move to Caloola Reserve, the Mayor of Oakleigh (Cr Pat Mahoney) wrote in 1985:

As Mayor of the City of Oakleigh, I would like to congratulate the South Oakleigh Soccer Club in their re-allocation to Caloola Reserve and on the works undertaken by them at the reserve.

The club is in a fairly high competition and would be worthy ambassadors in terms of representing the city on the soccer field. They are now in the second division and are hoping for elevation to the first division, which would be a great thing for the City of Oakleigh.¹²⁴

The club was rebranded as the Oakleigh Cannons Soccer Club in the 1990s. In 2003, its name was changed to the Oakleigh Cannons Football Club, and it gained promotion to the Victorian Premier League in that year.

Kon Kavalakis was appointed as Chairman of the club in 2005 after three years as Vice-Chairman. As at November 2024, he had been Chairman for nineteen years. When appointed, he saw the main challenges as improving the club's facilities, winning more support from all levels of government and increasing junior participation.

From around 80 junior players in 2002, there are now more than 700. Most players come from within a ten-kilometre radius of the club, and the participation of girls and women has greatly increased. A major achievement for the club has been the upgrading of the facilities at the Jack Edwards Reserve in Oakleigh, which is now the Cannons' home. A new grandstand plus facilities for female players has been made possible through a \$2 million grant from the Federal Government, \$4 million from the State Government and \$8.2 million from the City of Monash. (The club itself is contributing \$530,000 to the project.) This will enable the club to host major games and facilitate much greater participation by girls and women. The club is very grateful to the local federal, state and council politicians who have supported it.

The Cannons, like other sporting clubs, raise funds through raffles, the canteen and bar, special events and functions, and

through sponsorships. Sponsorships provide a substantial proportion of the club's income, and Kon Kavalakis estimates that around seventy-five per cent of Oakleigh businesses support the club. It is a mutually beneficial relationship, as the club brings people to Oakleigh where they often shop and visit hospitality venues and other businesses.

In 2014, the Victorian Premier League was replaced by the National Premier Leagues (NPL) Victoria, of which the Cannons were a part. In 2017, the Cannons finished sixth in the Victorian League. The Cannons were champions in 2022 and 2024. Chris Babatsias' son George, who played with the club from childhood and professionally in Greece for five years, is now the Oakleigh Cannons' co-manager.



The Cannons in 2017. (Source: Chris Babatsias)

The Cannons Football Club does not only nurture elite players. It established the affiliated Chisholm United Football Club in around 2014. While the Cannons aim to produce players for the National Premier Leagues Victoria, and potentially the Australian A-League, the Chisholm club is an environment in which non-elite players can participate. For example, senior players who miss out on a contract with the Cannons can move over to Chisholm and play at a high level in that competition. In this way, the club is accessible to the broader community and retains its members' loyalty and participation for a longer period.

There are now around 5000 people, including players, officials and families, connected with the Oakleigh Cannons Football Club. This enables the club to demonstrate to government that it serves a large community through its sporting services. Around fifty per cent of the players are not of Greek descent, and the backgrounds of coaches and the highest level players are very diverse, showing that the club does promote multiculturalism. At the same time, the club also benefits the Greek community through providing a social and recreational hub.

From their modest beginnings, the Cannons have become a high-profile sporting team and a focus for Greek community pride in Oakleigh.

The Hellenic Bowls Club of Victoria



Hellenic Bowls Club day at Oakleigh Bowling Club. (Photo from a video by Peter Casserly)

The Hellenic Bowls Club of Victoria was established in 2008 and the (approximately) fourteen male players, led by Herb Kyriakos, sought somewhere to play bowls on Sundays. Most of the group were members of other clubs for competition bowls on Saturdays – Elsternwick, Brighton and Sandringham, for example – but they wanted to play together socially. They approached Oakleigh Bowling Club (OBC) as a possible venue.

Oakleigh Bowling Club welcomed the Hellenic Bowls Club, and the Hellenic group invited Greeks from other clubs to join them when they gathered on Sundays once a month, starting in the 2008–09 season. They provided food, such as gyros, at the clubhouse, cooked lamb on the spit at Easter, and enjoyed having a drink at the bar.

Oakleigh Bowling Club also invited them to join the club as pennant players, and around eight of them accepted. In the 2010–11 season, Tom Zafiroopoulos and his father, Elias Zafiroopoulos, won the men's pairs Oakleigh Bowling Club club championship. They also won this championship in 2014–15, 2017–18 and in 2020–21.¹²⁵



*Elias Zafiroopoulos and Paul Raftopoulos at Oakleigh Bowling Club, 2017.
(Photo: Peter Casserly)¹²⁶*

After Herb Kyriakos relinquished the Presidency of the Hellenic Bowls Club in 2012, Angelo Alateras took over this position. A National Pan-Hellenic Bowls tournament was hosted at the Oakleigh Bowling Club in the 2013–14 season.¹²⁷ Angelo Alateras was elected president of the Oakleigh club for the 2015–16 season.¹²⁸

Herb Kyriakos and several of the other members have passed away in the last few years, and the Hellenic Bowls Club as a specific group closed down in around 2019, although five of its former members still play pennant for Oakleigh Bowling Club and live around Oakleigh. The Club is still hopeful that the Hellenic Bowls Club will be revived by new members.¹²⁹



Hellenic Bowls Club goblet from History Monash Inc. collection. (Photo: Ann Nield)



Plating up for Hellenic Bowls Club lunch at OBC. (Photo: Peter Casserly)

Multiculturalism in the Oakleigh context

IT IS NOW around seventy years since the first post-war Greek migrants moved to Oakleigh, and it has become a distinctly multicultural area. A range of shops represent different ethnic communities, and various festivals and significant cultural dates, such as the Glendi, Chinese New Year and Diwali, are celebrated officially and unofficially. Although Oakleigh now projects a strong Greek character, the Italian community and other displaced Europeans were prominent in the early post-war days of Oakleigh. The multicultural atmosphere has come about through the migrant communities' vision, leadership and work and through evolving mainstream attitudes; in particular, governments' repudiation of their earlier expectations that migrants would assimilate with the dominant culture of Australia. The Victorian Multicultural Commission, led by an Oakleigh resident George Lekakis from 2001 to 2011, had a direct and lasting impact through many important initiatives.

From the mid-1960s, largely through the work of academics¹³⁰ and migrant community leaders, there developed greater popular and official recognition of the value of migrant cultures and more understanding of the hardships which many were facing after settlement. In the early 1970s, governments recognised the important role played by ethnic organisations in helping with migrant settlement, and government spending on migrant support increased. Migrant languages and culture began to be accepted as compatible with mainstream institutions. In 1973, the Minister for Immigration in the Whitlam Government, Al Grassby, disseminated a key paper, *A Multi-cultural Society for the Future*. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam used the term 'multicultural' when announcing the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*. Multiculturalism was becoming a major political priority.¹³¹

In 1977 Malcolm Fraser's government established the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, chaired by Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, which recommended the public policy of multiculturalism. In 1978, the Fraser government implemented recommendations from the Galbally report (1978) which it had commissioned, creating the first official national multicultural policies.¹³²

The national and state shift in attitudes towards multiculturalism had particular relevance for Oakleigh, because it was developing into a significant culturally and linguistically diverse area. This is reflected in the reportage in the free, local English-language newspapers of the area.

69 NATURALISED AT BIG CEREMONY

Sixty nine candidates — the second largest number ever here — were naturalised at the 26th local ceremony on Thursday to bring the total naturalised in Oakleigh to 1,128.

At the first local ceremony on December 14, 1954, there were six candidates!

These facts were revealed by the Minister for Immigration, Mr. Opperman, who assisted the Mayor, Cr. R. L. Harris, Mayoress, Mrs. Harris, and Town Clerk, Mr. A. E. Raven, at the ceremony.

Mr. Opperman appealed to the candidates to tell their fellow countrymen of the wonderful opportunities in Australia, pointing out there were still 240,000 here who could be naturalised.

FIRST IMPRESSION

The Minister said that, for Australia's part, the most important thing was the first impression, and he congratulated the Oakleigh authorities on the wonderful first impression with they had made with such a fine ceremony.

Mr. Opperman said he still remembered the first impression he gained when he entered the R.A.A.F.

"I remember the names of my first mates, Bradley from N.S.W. and Bird from S.A. I remember them—and always will—because they came to my aid when I needed help."

The Mayor told the candidates that many of them would, through their experiences, knew what it meant to be denied freedom and rights. They would not be denied them here.

Immediate past president of the Good Neighbor Council, Sir Kingsley Norris, told them that what made Britain great was migration. There was not a person in the hall who wasn't there because of migration.

The Rev. R. K. Heriot joined in the welcome.

Members of the Presbyterian Women's Mission-

BOTTLE DRIVE

On June 20, Third Oakleigh Scout Group will hold a bottle drive to raise funds for further camping equipment.

Bottles, papers, rags, ear ties, and batteries are needed.

A collector will call if you phone 57 1305, 57 3960 or 544 5643.

To put record right

The Premier, Mr. Bolte, when speaking in Oakleigh

Bringing fame to city

The Mayor said the spectacular stage decorations—again greatly admired—were becoming a feature of the ceremonies and were bringing fame to Oakleigh.

He congratulated the City Curator, Mr. D. Page.

The Mayor also congratulated Guide Jennifer de Zilwa, Scout Graham Hutchings, ushers, the Jaycees, and all others who assisted.

• The Candidates.

Page 6.



In earnest conversation with Lady Norris, left, after the ceremony are Mr. and Mrs. Chrisos Catsanis, Latrobe-st., Oakleigh.

The young Greek couple have been here seven years, were married in Australia and have a 31-year-old son, Arthur.

Mrs. Catsanis has a brother and two sisters

also in Australia.

Mr. Catsanis is a boiler maker.

Lady Norris is the wife of the former president of the Good Neighbor Council.

In the early 1960s, the *Standard Times* (*Oakleigh*) was arguably mono-cultural in terms of its focus and editorial attitudes. As the years passed, however, there was more acknowledgement of the growing migrant community and its needs and articulation of the requirements of a more sensitive, multicultural approach.

Local ‘naturalisation’ (citizenship) ceremonies were often reported in the *Standard Times*. On 17 June 1964, the *Standard Times* reported that sixty-nine people had recently been naturalised in Oakleigh, with six Greek names in the list which also included Italians, Dutch, Germans and other Europeans. The *Standard Times* highlighted on its front page Mr Christos Catsanis, a Greek boilermaker and his (unnamed) wife among the candidates. The couple, it said, had arrived in Australia seven years previously, married in Australia and had a three-year-old son, Arthur. The Minister for Immigration told those at the ceremony that ten years earlier, in 1954, at the first Oakleigh ceremony, there were only six candidates for naturalisation. The total for Oakleigh up to June 1964 was 1128.

A decade later, the *Standard Times* became involved in the debate about resourcing the teaching of English to migrant children.¹³³ An article in 1977 stated that sixty-eight per cent of Oakleigh Primary School students in 1976 were Greek. Westall Primary School was said to have a similar proportion and Oakleigh High School about twenty-five per cent. It was claimed in an article two months later that at Oakleigh South

Primary School, ninety per cent of the migrant children were Greek, but that there were no bilingual teachers at the school and no representatives of the migrant community on the school council.¹³⁴ Also:

Clayton West Primary School [which was said to have sixty per cent of its children either Greek or Italian] has no migrant representatives on the mothers' club committee because of the language barrier and because most of the migrant mothers are working. Most other schools are the same.¹³⁵

The Principal of Oakleigh East Primary School said that his greatest problem was lack of communication with migrant parents.

In March 1977, an advertisement announced that the Oakleigh Citizens' Advice Bureau now had assistance for migrants, including counselling provided in Greek. By April, however, it was front page news that the migrant welfare officers had allegedly been removed by management.¹³⁶ Oakleigh's 'high-density migrant population of about 22,000, made up of over thirty nationalities' was cited by the newspaper as evidence of the need for these officers.

This news was followed by a major article in the *Standard Times* in May 1977, the first of a five-part series focussed upon Australia's inadequate support for migrants. It alleged that a substantial number of Greek migrants had already returned to Greece, with the Greek community reportedly blaming

unemployment and inadequate welfare and education facilities. The *Standard Times* claimed that:

Most of us are not only unaware of the cultural backgrounds of our new friends but also uninformed about the extent of their anxieties, hopes and fears. In many cases they have sacrificed all they have to put their trust in this country and we have repaid them with contempt and prejudice.¹³⁷

Greek immigrants were described in the article as being regarded as 'factory fodder' and as having been invited to Australia on false pretences. Further articles in the series dealt with the communication gap, unemployment, immigrant children's education and limited employment options: 'Condemned to the production line'.¹³⁸

In 1977, the year when the Fraser Government created the Australian Ethnic Affairs Council, government funding to support migrants via interpreters was announced in the local newspaper. The *Standard Times* observed that 'Oakleigh, part of Henty, has the second highest Greek population of metropolitan Melbourne, which in turn has the largest Greek population of any city except Athens'.¹³⁹

Reflecting changing community attitudes, Oakleigh Primary School held a special assembly in March 1979 to celebrate the Greek National Day. Children were invited to wear Greek national dress. The Principal gave a talk (translated into Greek) about the significance of the day to Greek people and 'the need to acknowledge such days in the multicultural

society within the school'. The Greek flag was paraded in the assembly, carried by two students, John Nikolakakis and Con Ganotis. The Greek national anthem was played while the children stood to attention in front of the Greek and Australian flags.¹⁴⁰



Oakleigh Primary School's Greek National Day celebration.

Standard Times (Oakleigh), 4 April 1979. (Source: History Monash Inc.)¹⁴¹

Also in 1979 the *Standard Times*, which was delivered free to all homes in the region, introduced a new section, 'Greek News'. The column in the Greek language was to include news about local events relevant to local Greek-speaking people. It would also convey information from community services and government, via a Greek journalist. During 1979 and the

early 1980s, the column presented a wide variety of news and information, including about voting processes, Department of Social Security services and holiday programs for children. By May 1980, a similar column in Italian had been added, with a Vietnamese column added in July for a short period and a column in French soon after.

By the 1980s, there was more responsiveness to the practical needs of people who had migrated to Australia, as seen in the appointment in mid 1983 of an Oakleigh City Council migrant welfare officer, Peter Negropontis.¹⁴² The Chair of the Welfare Committee for the Oakleigh Council was Cr John Salvaris.

Around sixty per cent of the student cohort of Hughesdale Primary School in 1980 was of migrant background, mostly Greek.¹⁴³ The school introduced a Community Language Policy in 1984, through which students had the option to learn another language or extend their own language.

Objectives for Greek-speaking children were to maintain and develop their 'mother tongue' and improve their ability to communicate at home, at school and in the community. For English-speaking children, it was seen as an opportunity to create inter-cultural understanding, respect and sharing of another culture.¹⁴⁴

The Modern Greek sessions were run by Helen Papas and Demetrios Polygenis, members of the Greek community. This program continued until 1996. The school had an active

ρίτοις αντιμένα τις έθνικές μας ένδυμασιες. Η χορωδία της έκκλησίας μας με μαέστρο τὸν άκούρτορο Γιάννη Απέκτο, έμαλλο μελωδικά την Θ. Λειτουργία και την Πανηγυρική Δοξολογία.

Ο λερέας π. Νικόλαος Μουτάφης μαλιστε με πατριωτικό ένθουσιασμό στὸ έκκλησιασμα, για τὴ σημασία ποὺ ἔχει ἡ έθνική αὐτὴ ἐπέτειος, για τὸν γηγενῆ καὶ ιδιαίτερα τὸν ἀπόδημο έλληναμό.

Τὸ οπίγευμα στὸ Κοινωνικὸ Κέντρο παρουσιάστηκε πλούσιο ἑορταστικὸ πρόγραμμα.

Η αίθουσα ἀπὸ νωρίς ήταν γεμάτη. Οι δάσκαλοι θριαστόταν σὲ συνεχῆ κινητοποίηση. Τὰ παιδιά ἀρχισταν μὲ μιὰ μεγαλειώδη παρέλαση. Τὰ μάτια τῶν γονιῶν ογράνθηκαν ἀπὸ συγκίνηση καὶ τὰ χέρια ἀδιάκοπα χειροκροτούσθαι τὰ τρυφερά θλαστάρια των. Τὰ περισσότερα παιδιά γεννημένα καὶ μεγαλωμένα στὴν Αυστραλία, μὲ τὸν φροντίδα καὶ κρυφὴ χαρὰ κρατοῦν τὸν Ἑλληνικὸ τους χαρακτήρα, ποὺ ἀσφαλῶς δίνει χρώμα στὴν

μα, αποσπουσε κανε τόσο ἀπὸ τὸν κόσμο ποὺ ξεπερνοῦνται τοὺς 700, τὰ ζωηρά, αὐθόρητα χειροκροτήματα.



Στιγμιότυπα ἀπὸ τὸν ἑορτασμὸ τῆς 28ης Ὁκτωβρίου τῆς Κοινότητας τοῦ "Οἰκλυ"

ΕΚΔΡΟΜΗ ΝΕΟΛΑΙΑΣ

Η Νεολαία τοῦ ΟΑΚΛΕΙΓΗ πραγματοποιήθηκε στὸ έκδρομὸ στὸ θαυμάσιο Πάρκο JELLS τὴν Κυριακὴν 21 Ὁκτωβρίου 1979.

Η σωστὴ διοργάνωση ἀπὸ μέρους τοῦ Συμβουλίου τῶν Νέων, μὲ τὰ νόστιμα σουθάκια, τὰ ἀναμυκτικά, τὰ παιχνίδια, σπόρ ποι εἰχγιά μικρούς καὶ μεγάλους καὶ πρόπαντας τὴν προθυμία τῶν νέων νὰ προσφέρουν τὶς ὑπηρεσίες τους τόσο ἀδύρμητα, σημιούργησε μιὰ εύχαριστη ἀτμόσφαιρα. Αξέισαν θερμά συγχαρητήρια στὸ Συμβούλιο τῆς Νεολαίας γιὰ τὴν ὀργανωτικὴ τοῦ Ικανότητα.

Μπράσο παιδιά! Θέ-

Greek News

MORE than 700 members of the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh celebrated the recent National Day of Greece.

Father Nicholaos Moutafis of the Oakleigh Greek Orthodox Church outlined to those present what was the meaning of the Greek National Day.

School children with their national costumes carrying the Greek and Australian flags also took part in the celebrations.

National Day, known as "No Day," is celebrated on October 28.

At midnight between October 27-28, 1940, the Greek Government refused an ultimatum delivered by Mussolini's ambassador.

As a result, Mussolini's troops crossed the Albanian frontier and marched into Greece.

The "Duce" said he would secure the capitulation of the Greek army within 10-15 days. However, within a week, the Greek army had counter-attacked and advanced into Albania.

*Greek News column in Standard Times (Oakleigh),
21 November 1979, p. 9. (Source: History Monash Inc.)*

Greek Parents' Committee which in 1986 raised money for the school through organising a dinner dance.¹⁴⁵ Hughesdale Primary School's multicultural aide in 1994, Bill Efrermides, translated the school's newsletters into Greek.



Hughesdale Primary School students in an International Children's Week parade, in the Standard Times (Oakleigh), 29 Oct 1980, p. 28. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

The *Standard Times* of 15 August 1984 carried an article about Oakleigh's multicultural demographics.¹⁴⁶ Under the title, 'Oakleigh is different', it stated that 'The profile of Oakleigh is the most diverse and fascinating of all the suburbs in the Southern Region'. Among the points it made were that:

- Oakleigh was the only southern suburb showing population growth (i.e. two per cent per annum).
- Thirty-nine per cent of Oakleigh's population was born overseas (compared to an average twenty-three per cent in the State).
- Of the thirty-nine per cent, twenty-eight per cent came from non-English speaking countries.
- Of the main migrant groups (Greeks, Italians, Yugoslavs, Spanish, Indochinese), Greeks were the majority, 'living mostly as a self-contained community'.
- Oakleigh had the highest percentage of 'ethnic students' in the region and the eighth largest in metropolitan Melbourne.
- The Oakleigh–Moorabbin industrial cluster was 'second only to Melbourne' in the number of jobs it provided. The cities of Oakleigh and Moorabbin provided sixty per cent of the jobs in the southern region, and the greatest number of jobs in the manufacturing sector (21,297) were in Oakleigh.

In 1985, the *Standard Times* featured a series of articles about multiculturalism in Australia, arguing for better assistance to migrants. By then, the Victorian Ministry for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs had been established (1977), the Victorian *Ethnic Affairs Commission Act* had been legislated (1982) and the Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission had been established (1983).¹⁴⁷

A Migrant Resource Centre with Greek-speaking staff was established in Atherton Road Oakleigh in 1992, following successful representations by local Greek leaders to Simon Crean, the Federal Member for Hotham (1990–2013) and a cabinet minister in the Hawke, Keating, Rudd and Gillard governments.



*Simon Crean, Oakleigh-Springvale Times, 18 April 1990, p. 8.
(Source: History Monash Inc.)*

The Oakleigh Greek community believed itself to be well supported by Simon Crean. Despite his many ministerial duties, Crean found time to attend Greek community events, and he championed Greek causes and organisations. Like his father, Frank Crean, who had supported Greek migrants in his Melbourne Ports electorate in earlier times, Simon Crean was an admirer of Greeks and their culture, and he had a good relationship with Father Moutafis. Crean's initiatives led to greater recognition of the Greek community.¹⁴⁸ He supported funding to the Migrant Resource Centres, to Pronia (part of the AGWS) and Fronditha, and he instigated programs to provide job opportunities for migrants.

Local migrant issues were also promoted by the Southern Ethnic Advocacy and Advisory Council, formed in 1991, which gave migrant communities a voice on issues which affected them at local, state and federal levels. George Lekakis provided leadership in the establishment of this body.

Oakleigh is now a vibrant multicultural centre which owes much, not only to government policy changes, but to the initial hard work of its migrant communities and their determination – against the odds for some time – to preserve and celebrate their cultures. This work was done while maintaining harmonious relationships with the community at large.

OAKLEIGH IS OUR LIFE



*Building on corner of Chester and Eaton Streets in 1989, Gaitleys Menswear (Source: History Monash Inc.), and as Meat Me Souvlaki in 2025.
(Photo: Ann Nield, 2025)*

Eaton Mall

Eaton Mall has become the heart of Greek café culture in Oakleigh and is sometimes referred to as ‘Little Athens’. While there are many other thriving Greek restaurants and cafes located nearby in Oakleigh, such as Oakleigh Fish and Chippery, Kalimera Souvlaki Art, Mykonos, Orexi Souvlaki Bar and Greca Street, the Mall resembles an Australian variant of the Greek village square with its tavernas and *kafenions*.

Eaton Street was originally a through street and in the mid-1970s, the location of businesses such as men’s and women’s wear, a pharmacy, shoe shops, a sports store, banks, furniture, a pet shop and two grocers, Coles and Nancarrows.¹⁴⁹ Station Street had an equal claim to be the centre of retail business. However, Chadstone Shopping Centre, which had opened in 1960, had a greater variety of shops and plentiful parking and was attracting custom away from Oakleigh. The concept of a pedestrian mall was proposed by the Oakleigh Chamber of Commerce, and Eaton Street was consequently closed to motor vehicles from September 1972 for a six-month trial. At that stage, there was strong opposition from many of the

traders in Eaton Street and nearby, who were worried that if customers could not park outside their shops, they would desert Oakleigh.¹⁵⁰



Easton's Pastrycook corner, Atherton Road and Eaton Street, 1913.

(Source: History Monash Inc.)

Later in 1973, the City of Oakleigh's Town Planning Committee recommended to Council that the southern end of Eaton Street be reopened to traffic but the northern end of the street remain a pedestrian mall. Council supported the recommendation, apart from two councillors who, ostensibly on behalf of Eaton Street traders, proposed abandoning the

mall altogether. Councillor John Perryman said that the mall development was 'doomed from the outset'.¹⁵¹

Eaton Street between Atherton Road and Chester Street was formally closed to vehicles on 7 April 1977.¹⁵² In September of that year, the Oakleigh Chamber of Commerce exhorted the public to submit designs for the appearance of the mall, its own design proposal having been rejected by Council.¹⁵³ The Chamber's Chair, Alan Rice, also urged traders in Oakleigh to brighten up the shopping precinct, for example, 'with a coat of paint' or through replacing old awnings, pipes and spouting.¹⁵⁴



Eaton Mall, 1981. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

In April 1987, the *Standard Times* reported that work would commence on an extension to what was already called Eaton Mall.¹⁵⁵ The extension was a project jointly funded by the State Government and the City of Oakleigh, with the stated aim of providing a safe, convenient and comfortable shopping experience.¹⁵⁶ The projected ‘attractive pedestrian precinct’ would have patterned brick pavers, planter boxes and street furniture. In the official announcement, there was no mention of creating a café precinct.

The section of Eaton Street between Chester and Portman streets was permanently closed in October 1987 with an official ceremony attended by councillors and council officers.¹⁵⁷ Shoppers were treated to a chicken and champagne breakfast. The Oakleigh Central shopping complex had opened on the former railway yards in that year, and the entrance to this in Portman Street was close to Eaton Mall, creating an easily accessible, larger retail experience.

Eaton Mall and the Oakleigh shopping precinct took some time to develop their current character. In 1995, a report prepared for the City of Monash identified that the area still did not fulfil its potential to be a regional centre: ‘... the cosmopolitan nature of the centre should be used as a resource to build on’.¹⁵⁸ At this stage, the appearance of the mall was uninspiring.

Nikos Cakes moved to the corner of Eaton Mall and Portman Street in 1997, and its owners, Nick and Tass Pouporuzas,

worked hard to encourage other Greek businesses to join them in Oakleigh. Vanilla Lounge opened in Eaton Mall in 2008.



North-west corner of Eaton Mall and Atherton Road, 1980s. This building was demolished and the site is now occupied by Alimonakis Pharmacy. (Source: History Monash Inc.)

In 2013, Eaton Mall received a substantial upgrade via an initiative of the Victorian Multicultural Commission's Cultural Precincts and Community Infrastructure Fund. The aim of the Cultural Precincts initiatives, which were led by the Chair of the Commission, George Lekakis AO, was to promote and preserve diversity of identities and heritages through enhancing existing community spaces. In this instance, the goal was to revitalise Eaton Mall and to give it a Mediterranean atmosphere while making it friendly to many other communities.¹⁵⁹ The project, which was co-funded by

the City of Monash, included better paving, lighting, trees and public seating, and new sculptures.

The COVID-19 epidemic lockdowns in 2020 and 2021 took their toll on the central business area of Oakleigh. A number of businesses, including some in the mall, closed due to poor patronage when customers were not allowed to gather there.

Eaton Mall is now, however, a pedestrian strip bustling with patrons. Greek music pours out of cafes, televisions broadcast Greek sporting matches and news, and waiters chat to their customers in Greek. An arcade called Monastiraki is named after the Plaka area of Athens.

Alimonakis Pharmacy, which opened under this name in 2004, sits prominently on the corner of Atherton Road and Eaton Mall, on the site of the former Hattam's drapers, then Fossey's department store. With all of its counter staff able to speak Greek, Alimonakis Pharmacy supports customers in a culturally sympathetic way and, like most other businesses in the mall, projects a Greek character.



Alimonakis Pharmacy, corner of Eaton Mall and Atherton Road, Oakleigh. (Photo: Ann Nield)

Nikos Cakes



Nikos Cakes 2024, corner Eaton Mall and Portman Street, Oakleigh. (Photo: Ann Nield)

Nick and Tass (Anastasia) Poupouzas are the founders and owners of Nikos Cakes in Oakleigh. They are popularly credited with bringing to central Oakleigh the hospitality businesses which have changed it into a vibrant coffee, dining and social precinct.

As a young man, Nick, who had migrated to Australia at age six with his parents, worked as a waiter at a cake shop/ café in the Greek precinct of Lonsdale Street, Melbourne. There he learned the skills of a pastry chef and met Tass who was undertaking business studies in Swanston Street. Nick

became a co-owner of this business, but the working hours were very long and difficult when they had young children. In 1986, Nick and Tass, therefore, decided to start their own business elsewhere. They were attracted by the growing Greek community in the Oakleigh area but were warned by one real estate agent that they would lose their money if they invested there, because Oakleigh was so quiet. Nonetheless, they opened a cake shop at 41 Portman Street. The demand for their cakes and Greek biscuits was beyond their expectations and after four years, they took over 43 Portman Street as well. They had five tables in the cake shop for drinking coffee with their cakes, but their customers urged them to provide more. After another move in around 1992 to 25 Portman Street, their biggest opportunity came along when the property on the north-western corner of Eaton Mall and Portman Street came up for lease in 1997. When the shop next door in Eaton Mall became vacant soon afterwards, they were able to provide more café space. They still had long queues for their cakes!

Nick and Tass kept urging business owners in Lonsdale Street to move to Oakleigh, as they thought it would be in everyone's interest to have more Greek businesses in the area. After initial reluctance, over the next twenty-five years, businesses such as Kronos travel agent, Limnos butcher, Prahran Seafoods and Alex Jewellers followed Nick and Tass to Oakleigh. One of these business owners told the Poupouzases that his business had tripled in one year since moving from Lonsdale Street, and that he should have moved earlier.

Business was booming for the Poupouzases, and they kept extending their opening hours to the point that they now open 365 days a year from early morning until late at night and serve meals which feature iconic Greek dishes. They employ around 130 staff and have opened other businesses in Melbourne, including a Nikos Cakes in Fairfield. Their three adult children now have leading roles in the business.

Nick and Tass constantly refresh their business by renovating the premises, and Nikos Oakleigh can now serve around three hundred patrons at a time. They believe in the importance of supporting local clubs and charities.

People come to Oakleigh from far and wide to patronise Nikos, including Australian politicians and visiting Greek notables, including the Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis in 2008. Tass and Nick worked extremely hard, and it was years before they could take a holiday. They are happy that, after all their hard work, they have helped to change Oakleigh and make it so well known.



*Katialo 2024 (kati allo in Greek means 'something else')
cafe in the Eaton Mall. (Photo: Ann Nield)*

Vanilla Lounge

Another large and popular landmark in Eaton Mall is Vanilla Lounge.¹⁶⁰ Opened in 2008, Vanilla broke new ground in Eaton Mall by providing a large café–restaurant area, often featuring live music, to complement its patisserie business. It also had extended opening hours, which enabled patrons to linger in Eaton Mall late into the evenings. Vanilla Lounge received national publicity on 8 July 2016 when the then Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, visited Oakleigh to congratulate Julia Banks on her election as a new Liberal Party Member of the House of Representatives. The Prime Minister and Ms Banks had coffee at Vanilla Lounge and met local people in Eaton Mall.



Vanilla Lounge, Eaton Mall, 2025. (Photo: Ann Nield)



One of the people interviewed for this study said that the Oakleigh shops are handy for those travelling to Greece: if you forget to bring back home a souvenir for someone, you can buy it locally and no one will ever know the difference! Some say that the new wave of Greek migration, following the Greek economic crisis of 2010, has revitalised Oakleigh's hospitality scene and that one can identify the 'new wave' arrivals through the purer Greek which they speak.

In the words of local Greek businesspeople:

'Oakleigh is like a Greek suburb.'¹⁶¹

'Oakleigh is the only area in Melbourne with Greeks that has a square. That's why it reminds me a lot of Greece. I am here for three years. The place has changed, it is very lively.'¹⁶²

'It's the love for Greek culture, the Greek food, the friendliness and the atmosphere when you come to the mall. You can come and catch up with friends in a place with no traffic. It's like their backyard.'¹⁶³

The significance of Eaton Mall to multicultural Victoria was underscored in February 2025 when a team from the Special Broadcasting Service, SBS, filmed people and Greek businesses in that precinct. This segment is part of a documentary on multicultural neighbourhoods to celebrate the 50th anniversary of SBS.



Caffe Greco in Eaton Mall, 2025. (Photo: Ann Nield)



Mythos GR Gyros Bar, Eaton Mall, 2025. (Photo: Ann Nield)

Looking back on the early years

OAKLEIGH IN 1973 was remembered by one interviewee as still having some small farms and she and her family walked to them to buy eggs and fruit. She saw horses kept on blocks of land between suburban houses and Oakleigh shopping precinct seemed to her to be small and very Anglocentric in atmosphere. Then gradually more Greek families moved into the area, gravitating to where they felt at home with the language and community.

The success of Nikos Cakes has been credited with inspiring the establishment of other Greek pastry shops, restaurants, delicatessens and fresh food and specialty shops, all importing goods from Greece. Butchers sold cuts which were not available at non-Greek butchers, often cheaper cuts which Greeks knew how to cook. Greeks were eventually able to buy food which they were used to (and some of which, previously, they may have brought to Melbourne in their suitcases). The first Greek supermarket in Oakleigh was said to be in Oxford

Street. One woman who worked there as a teenager said that it was so popular that customers visited from other parts of Melbourne. Competition, she said, only came when Coles supermarket hired a Greek manager to cater to local food needs.

A woman who attended Oakleigh Primary School in the late 1960s remembered that she and her sister were among the few Greeks at that school which seemed then, like the suburb, very monocultural.

Another woman growing up in Oakleigh surrounded by other Greek households, remembered that the smell of food cooking, especially on festival days, was 'overwhelming'. It was easy to spot the Greek homes, she said, with a lemon tree taking centre stage in the yard, surrounded by other fruit trees and with the olive trees in a corner. Neighbours were competitive about who had the first, biggest and best of everything. Mother's Day was, and continues to be, the event when after lunch three generations harvest olives from their trees together.

The first generation migrants were proud of coming to Australia and demonstrating that rewards come to those who work hard. The second generation were proud of their parents' self-sacrifice and industry. They feel grateful for the opportunities which their parents gave them and for their perseverance through difficult times. They also feel grateful

to the early Greek community for its efforts in building the church and school.

Greek migrants were grateful to Australia for the opportunities it gave them. One female migrant said that 'Australia is the land that fed me, clothed me and made me feel safe'. First generation Greek migrants were proud of gaining Australian citizenship. A typical comment was that they had had a good life and loved Australia.

Some children of the migrants, however, had not found it easy to reconcile the traditional values of their parents with the values they observed in the mainstream Australian culture, particularly if they were girls. One spoke of wanting more freedom and having to push against her parents' reluctance to let her finish high school, because of their belief that the role of a woman was to be a mother supported by a husband. They told her that girls should be married by the age of eighteen.

Most of the people interviewed had returned to Greece for holidays. Their primary objective was to see family whom they had left behind, not to travel as tourists. Many of the second generation have long holidays in Greece in the Melbourne winter, rebuilding their families' homes there. One interviewee said that the main topic of conversation among Oakleigh Greeks after Orthodox Easter is when they will be leaving for Greece and for how long. She said that shops in Oakleigh are quieter after Greek Easter. The travellers return

to Australia when the weather turns cold in Greece, so they have two summers each year.

It took great courage to leave Greece for an unknown future in Australia, especially if it was to join a fiancé or spouse who was effectively a stranger. Many migrants were leaving behind a closely knit community with well-established customs for a lonelier existence in a completely different environment. Most of those interviewed experienced at least some discrimination and unfriendliness from other Australians. They recalled being called names and being told to speak English if they conversed in Greek on trains. Interviewees spoke of the solace provided by the church, which also helped to maintain their language and culture. They say that the church is still relevant to their young people, and it helps that some services are now partly in English which means that everyone can understand the rituals. The church still brings families together for weddings, baptisms and funerals and the religious festivals which mark out the year. A senior member of the community said that it is not unusual for 1000 people to attend the church on some Sundays.

Changes noticed in Oakleigh include the number of houses which are now vacant. Some of these are the homes of the older Greek generation who have moved into assisted living or to smaller units. Where possible, they stay in the area to enjoy the companionship and amenities of their community.¹⁶⁴

Conclusion

‘This is the heart of Hellenism in the whole of Australia. We speak our mother language and we are proud of that.’¹⁶⁵

Oakleigh is, of course, more than just its Greek component. The region has a rich Indigenous history as well as more than 150 years of settlement by other European (particularly British) immigrants. In the words of the City of Monash Mayor in 2004, however, ‘The Greek community has clearly had a profound impact on the Oakleigh area, in particular over the past few decades.’¹⁶⁶

Greek enterprises have helped substantially to maintain central Oakleigh as a thriving business area. In 1949 an elderly local businessman, J.J. Boland, wrote his memories of the area for the City of Oakleigh councillors. He predicted a bright future for Oakleigh: ‘I always had great confidence in Oakleigh’s future and my ambition is now realized.’¹⁶⁷ He did not, however, foresee the direction which this future would take: that is, the waves of immigration from many countries which would give Oakleigh commerce so much vitality. Enterprises established by people of Greek descent now bring

people from all over Melbourne to enjoy a distinctive shopping and culinary experience, as well as the ability to access other services, such as legal, medical, banking, accounting, real estate, education and welfare, provided by Greek-speaking professionals.

The Oakleigh Greek community has thrived. Strong, dedicated leadership from the early years ensured the success of initiatives such as religious and educational institutions, social organisations and welfare. Cohesion in the community, fostered by religion, heritage and language, has developed pride and loyalty sustained through the generations. The enterprise and vision of individuals inspires others. The community has nurtured positive relationships with local, state and federal politicians who have supported important multicultural projects. Greek Australians have themselves played an active role in politics and civic life, showing by example the benefits of service to the wider community. And in return, Oakleigh has benefitted.

Greeks may have moved into Oakleigh somewhat later than other European migrants, but they have stayed and brought their special character to it. Their commitment is evident in the comment of a prominent business owner of Greek descent who said:

‘Oakleigh is our life’.

Acknowledgements – Ευχαριστώ

I am immensely grateful to the individuals and families who so generously shared their stories. Typical of their positive approach was one comment: 'It was a pleasure to discuss my beloved Oakleigh.' Thank you for your important contribution to the history of Oakleigh.

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My sincere gratitude also goes to George Lekakis AO for believing in this project, helping with information and contacts and for writing supportive statements while leading Victoria's Multicultural Review in 2025.

The people and organisations described in this book are but a small sample of those who made enormous contributions to building the Greek community in Oakleigh. Unfortunately space did not permit the inclusion of many others who have important stories. I hope that the work of recording their contributions can continue. I apologise for any errors which may be present despite my best efforts.

This book is dedicated to all who so bravely came from Greece and made Oakleigh and surrounds their home.

Ann Nield, 2025

Notes

Please note that some of these websites may have changed since being accessed by the author.

- ¹ City of Monash Urban Design Office and collaborative team. July 2002. *Urban Design Framework Final Report*. Melbourne. Note: by 2002, Eaton Street was known as Eaton Mall.
- ² Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. 2021. *Greece-born Community Information Summary*. www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2021-cis-greece.pdf. However, Peter Prineas, in his book *Wild Colonial Greeks* (2020. Arcadia), suggests that a Greek man was living in NSW by 1823.
- ³ www.origins.museumsvictoria.com.au/countries/Greece.
- ⁴ www.vic.gov.au/greek-community-profile and www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00672b.htm
- ⁵ Godley, Stephen and Hughes, Philip J. 1996. *The Eastern Orthodox in Australia*. Canberra: Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research.
- ⁶ https://old.greekcommunity.com.au/gocmv_public/index.php/en/churches/annunciation-of-our-lady
- ⁷ Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. 2021. *Greece-born Community Information Summary*. www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2021-cis-greece.pdf.
- ⁸ Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. 2021. *Greece-born Community Information Summary*. www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2021-cis-greece.pdf.
- ⁹ [https://origins.museumsvictoria.com.au/countries/greece/](http://origins.museumsvictoria.com.au/countries/greece/)
- ¹⁰ Pennay, Bruce. 2011. *Greek Journeys Through Bonegilla: Post-War Immigrants from Greece to Australia*. Albury Wodonga: Charles Sturt University, p. 1.

¹¹ <https://www.naa.gov.au/explore-collection/immigration-and-citizenship/migrant-stories/greece/>

¹² www.Greekaustralianarchive.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/trip

¹³ Australian Government Department of Home Affairs. 2021. *Greece-born Community Information Summary*. www.homeaffairs.gov.au/mca/files/2021-cis-greece.pdf

¹⁴ See www.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/greek-australian-odyssey for the memories of Athina Stavrelis whose family left Greece in 1968 as political refugees, fleeing the 1967–1974 dictatorship.

¹⁵ ‘The first charge on Bonegilla Employment Officers was to fill vacancies in designated priority area where the nation had difficulty in finding workers, for example, in the rural sector, brick and tile works, tanneries, pipe making and pipe laying, gas and water reticulation, railway construction, manufacturing and domestic duties.’ Pennay, Bruce. 2011. *Greek Journeys Through Bonegilla: Post-War Immigrants from Greece to Australia*. Albury Wodonga: Charles Sturt University, pp. 2 and 17.

¹⁶ https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/3207_AUS

¹⁷ Tsolidis, Georgina. 1995. ‘Greek–Australian Families’. In *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*. Edited by Robyn Hartley. Allen and Unwin in association with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, p. 131: ‘In 1901 the ratio was 1206:100 in favour of males; in 1947 it was 287:100; and by 1981 it was 106:100’, citing Australian Bureau of Immigration and Population Research (BIPR) 1994, *Community Profiles*. 1991 Census: Greece Born. AGPS, Canberra. 1994.

¹⁸ www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00672b.htm.

¹⁹ Tsolidis, *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*, p. 131.

²⁰ Story told about her mother by one of the interviewees for this study.

²¹ From Museums Victoria Collections Note: ‘Migration for marriage and in particular, the marriage “by proxy” phenomenon, is a significant theme in the history of migration to Australia. Since the mid-nineteenth century Irish bride ships, women have been arriving in Australia over time as wives, brides and brides-to-be as part of chain migration, family reunion schemes and proactive government efforts to redress gender

imbalances. This collection enables the exploration through material culture and memory of the post-war proxy bride experience which dramatically impacted upon the lives of thousands of Italian, Greek, Maltese and other European women who travelled here in the 1950s and 1960s with high expectations of husbands, homes and families – expectations that frequently were not fulfilled.’ <https://collections.museumsvictoria.com.au/items/1404081>.

²² Also called *MS Patris* in some references.

²³ www.sbs.com.au/language/greek/en/article/remembering-the-patris-the-iconic-ship/that-brought-thousands-of-greeks-to-australia/96vpknxqd. Also, Harris-Papiaonnou, Stacey. 2022. ‘Greek “Proxy” Brides Head to Australia’, in *=Greek Reporter*, 7 Feb. For drawings of the Chandris line ‘migrant ships’, see www.linerdesigns.com. The YouTube seminar ‘Chandris: By Sea to Australia’ free virtual seminar 2020, Greek Community of Melbourne, youtube.com/watch?v=08q23BExVDs presents interesting history about these ships.

²⁴ www.greekaustralianarchive.sl.nsw.gov.au/stories/trip.

²⁵ Pennay p. 11, ‘... in 1961 32 per cent of married migrant women were in the paid workforce; this was in contrast with 15 per cent of Australian married women. A survey in Victoria found that 48 per cent of Greek wives were working.’

²⁶ Pennay, p. 11.

²⁷ Tsolidis, *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*, p. 134.

²⁸ Summary notes on this website state: ‘Black and white photograph showing members of the Andrianakis and Lefas families standing on Station Pier, Port Melbourne, 1957. The families had gathered for the arrival of a relation, Maria, who had come to Australia to marry Petro Lefas (standing back row left). This photograph shows their first meeting. Maria brought the home-made rugs that are strapped to the side of her suitcase as a gift to the Andrianakis family. Georgia and Dimosthenis Andrianakis (back row right) were the matchmakers of the marriage. The rugs are still in the family. Dimosthenis was the first person to emigrate to Australia from his village, and convinced many people to follow him, including Maria’s two sisters who came out to Australia in the years after she arrived.’

²⁹ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/3207-2>. NSW had 141,627 people of Greek ancestry – see [www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data /quickstats/2021/3207-1](https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/3207-1).

³⁰ https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/3207_2GMEL. The 2020 American Community Survey conducted by the US Census Bureau showed 187,255 people of Greek ancestry living in the New York metropolitan area, which is, however, broader than simply Manhattan Island.

³¹ The School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. July 2008. [www.emelbourne.net.au>Ethnicity and Demography>Greeks](http://www.emelbourne.net.au/Ethnicity_and_Demography/Greeks).

³² [www.emelbourne.net.au>Ethnicity and Demography>Greeks](http://www.emelbourne.net.au/Ethnicity_and_Demography/Greeks).

³³ Alexakis, Effie and Janiszewski, Leonard. 2016. *Greek Cafes and Milk Bars of Australia*. Canberra, p. 55.

³⁴ Pennay, p. 3.

³⁵ Pennay, p. 9.

³⁶ Pennay, p. 12, citing Young, Christabel et al. 1983. *Report on Greek and Italian Youth Employment Study*. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, p. 4.

³⁷ Pennay, p. 15, citing Young, Christabel et al. 1983. *Report on Greek and Italian Youth Employment Study*. Canberra: Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, p. 4.

³⁸ <https://greekcommunity.com.au/about/a-brief-outline-of-the-history-of-the-greek-orthodox-community-of-melbourne-and-victoria>.

³⁹ <https://greekcommunity.com.au/about/a-brief-outline-of-the-history-of-the-greek-orthodox-community-of-melbourne-and-victoria> gives background to establishment of this church.

⁴⁰ Much of the following summary is taken from AGWS-20-Years-Commemorative-web.pdf which includes Moraitis, Spiro. 1992. 'A Brief History of the Australian Greek Welfare Society September 1972 to September 1992'.

⁴¹ See Christos Nicholas Fife, 'VALE Dr Spiro Moraitis: The Passing of a Visionary Greek Leader', in *Neos Kosmos*, 29 Sept 2023.

⁴² Moraitis, p. 15.

⁴³ Moraitis, p. 28.

⁴⁴ The following summary draws upon a 2014 report published by the Australian Greek Welfare Society: Tsingas, Dr Constantine. 2014. 'The Journey of New Greek Migrants to Australia: Opportunities and Challenges', available online at https://www.pronia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/the_journey_of_new_greek_migrants_to_australia_-_english.pdf 2014, p. 16.

⁴⁵ Tsingas, Dr. Constantine. 2014. The Journey of New Greek Migrants to Australia: Opportunities and Challenges. www.pronia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/the_journey_of_new_greek_migrants_to_australia_-_english.pdf 2014, p. 16.

⁴⁶ Tsingas, p. 34: 'Based on ABS Net Overseas Migration arrivals to Victoria of Greek and Cypriot residents by country of citizenship and country of birth it can be stated with high degree of confidence that at least 4,141 residents of Greece and Cyprus arrived in Victoria between the 2009–10 and 2012–13 financial years. This number may understate the reality as it does not include those who came on short-term visas and hoped to convert these in order to stay.'

⁴⁷ Comment by a member of the Oakleigh Greek community.

⁴⁸ Tsingas, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Tsingas, Foreword and p. 15.

⁵⁰ Tsingas, p. 24, quoting OECD Economic Surveys: Greece 2013, p. 43: https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2013/11/oecd-economic-surveys-greece-2013_g1g38894/eco_surveys-grc-2013-en.pdf: 'Unemployment, especially among youth (with an unemployment rate around 60%), is very high.'

⁵¹ Tsingas, p. 26, Figure 2: Total number of Greek and Cyprus residents arriving in Victoria. Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics – Net Overseas Migration arrivals customised data, 2014. Note: the 2012-13 figure is an estimate by the ABS.

⁵² https://abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2011/3207_0.

⁵³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2011/0>.

⁵⁴ Tsingas, p. 11.

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, 30 Sept 2023.

⁵⁶ Gobbi, HG. *Taking Its Place: A History of Oakleigh marking its sesquicentenary 1853–2003*. Oakleigh. 2004. Oakleigh & District Historical Society pp. 19, 21.

⁵⁷ Gobbi, *Taking Its Place*, p. 63.

⁵⁸ Gobbi, *Taking Its Place*, p. 139.

⁵⁹ Gobbi, *Taking Its Place*, p. 154.

⁶⁰ Gobbi, *Taking Its Place*, p. 222.

⁶¹ Gobbi, *Taking Its Place*, p. 224.

⁶² Gobbi, *Taking Its Place*, p. 227.

⁶³ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/LGA24970>.

⁶⁴ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL22000>. Note that this does not include Hughesdale, Huntingdale or Oakleigh East which share with Oakleigh the postcode 3166, nor Oakleigh South 3167. In Hughesdale 14.3% of the population had Greek ancestry: <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/208021180>.

⁶⁵ <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/SAL22000>.

⁶⁶ This is supported by a doctor who worked at the Queen Victoria Hospital in Lonsdale Street in the 1960s and who remembered the large number of Greek women giving birth there.

⁶⁷ Papathanasiou, Iris. 2024. ‘Farewell to a Lonsdale Street Icon’. *Neos Kosmos*, Friday 20 Sept 2024.

⁶⁸ See the section on Nikos Cakes in this study. Nikos opened in Oakleigh in 1986 after its owners, the Pouporuzases, moved from Lonsdale Street.

⁶⁹ Papathanasiou, Iris. 2024. ‘Farewell to a Lonsdale Street Icon’. *Neos Kosmos*, Friday 20 Sept 2024.

⁷⁰ Busch, Brittany. 2024. ‘Melbourne’s “Little Athens” loses another slice of its history’, *The Age*, 25 Oct 2024.

⁷¹ One of the last market gardens was sold off in around 1950.

⁷² www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/we-built-city/general-motors-holden-we-built-city.

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⁷³ www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/we-built-city/heinz-we-built-city.

⁷⁴ www.greaterdandenong.vic.gov.au/we-built-city/international-harvester-we-built-city.

⁷⁵ It should be noted that the directories' contents were usually a year or so out of date, allowing for the time taken to compile and publish.

⁷⁶ The data comes from the Oakleigh pages only. Oakleigh South, Huntingdale, Clayton and other nearby suburbs have not been included, although they also had strong Greek communities. Hughesdale was a part of Oakleigh until 1994.

⁷⁷ The inclusion of the family names thought to be Greek has been informed personal knowledge, by Google searches and reference to https://diasporatravelgreece.com/the-ancestry-of-your-Greek-last-name/#google_vignette. Where there was uncertainty, a name has been omitted from the count. Hence the caveat of 'approximately'. Charakas and Chanakas, the same family, are as written in the directories.

⁷⁸ For a long list of philanthropic Greek brotherhood associations in Australia, see http://www.hri.org/MFA/abroadgr/society/nat_aus.htm.

⁷⁹ That is, 'Australian Greekness'.

⁸⁰ Tsolidis, in *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*, p. 126.

⁸¹ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 2 Feb 1973, p. 3.

⁸² *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 'Everyone is learning Greek', 2 Feb 1973, p. 5.

⁸³ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 9 Dec 1987, p. 15. This article says that the Glendi has operated since 2015.

⁸⁴ *Greek Herald* 30 Oct 2024: 'Oakleigh Glendi returns for spectacular weekend of culture and community this November.'

⁸⁵ www.eMelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM006726.htm. July 2008. Melbourne: The School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne. 'By 1972 the number of churches and parishes had grown to 25.'

⁸⁶ Memory of a senior church member.

⁸⁷ 2023 report, 'The Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District Inc. – Celebrating 60 Years'.

⁸⁸ The Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District Inc. 2004. *Honorary album for the proclamation of Constantine Baltas as honorary President of the Community*. (English translation of title) Venus Press: Richmond.

⁸⁹ Letter from Archbishop Ezekiel, 18 Dec 1963, reproduced in the 2023 report, 'The Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District Inc. – Celebrating 60 Years' (English translation of title).

⁹⁰ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 24 Oct 1973, p.3

⁹¹ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 12 Jul 1978, p. 5.

⁹² 2023 report by the Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District Inc., 'Celebrating 60 Years', p. 6.

⁹³ Bill Roumeliotis, *Greek Herald*, 18 Nov 2024.

⁹⁴ The war record for Australian Private Charles Vernon Elphick (Army, WX4730, born 1910) shows that he was interned at Stalag 18D, at Stalag 18B, at Oflag 3C, and at Stalag 383. Somehow Charles survived these camps and returned home after the war.

⁹⁵ Memories of a former leader in the community and a former student at the college.

⁹⁶ *Oakleigh Monash Leader*, 24 Mar 2003, p. 1.

⁹⁷ *Oakleigh Monash Leader*, 24 Mar 2003. p. 5.

⁹⁸ From the Oakleigh Grammar School website, Oct 2024. <https://www.oakleighgrammar.vic.edu.au/>.

⁹⁹ Oakleigh Grammar School website, Oct 2024.

¹⁰⁰ Angelos Sardelis was also made an Honorary President of the Greek Orthodox Community in 2007.

¹⁰¹ Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and District. 26 Sept 2004. *Honorary album for the proclamation of Constantine Baltas as honorary President of the Community*. (English translation of title.)

¹⁰² *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 20 Feb 1963.

¹⁰³ <https://melbourneseafoodcentre.com.au/jack-miriklis-pty-ltd>.

¹⁰⁴ The Melbourne edition of *Ta Nea* was first published in 1961.

¹⁰⁵ *Neos Kosmos* was established in 1957.

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¹⁰⁶ *Nea Patria* was first published in 1966.

¹⁰⁷ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 19 Aug 1984 p. 13.

¹⁰⁸ The issue of car parking in Oakleigh had been contentious since the 1970s, with shopkeepers and customers all dissatisfied with the amount of parking near the shopping centre. The City of Oakleigh's *Oakleigh District Centre Structure Plan Study* by Ecoconsult (Australia) Pty Ltd in 1986 called for an extension of the existing car parking in Hanover Street.

¹⁰⁹ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 26 Sept 1984, p. 1.

¹¹⁰ *Progress* (The Staff Magazine of the State Savings Bank), October 1968, No. 29

¹¹¹ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 1 Jun 1977, p. 6.

¹¹² *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 29 Feb 1984, p. 4.

¹¹³ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 20 Sept 1977 p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Pronia. 'Our Services and Programs'. www.pronia.com.au. Website content as at December 2024.

¹¹⁵ Tsolidis in *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*, p. 26.

¹¹⁶ *Oakleigh-Springvale Times* 19 Dec 1990, p. 7.

¹¹⁷ Arnall and Jackson. *Victorian Municipal Directory and Gazetteer*. Melbourne. Published from at least 1951 until 1994.

¹¹⁸ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 1 Jun 1984, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 2 May 1984, p. 5.

¹²⁰ www.monash.vic.gov.au/About-Us/Council/Governance-History/City-of-Monash-Governance. Former Councillors and Mayors list.

¹²¹ See www.stevedimopoulos.com.au. Website content as at November 2024.

¹²² Steve Dimopoulos' inaugural speech to the Victoria Legislative Assembly, 11 Feb 2015. <https://hansard.parliament.vic.gov.au/>.

¹²³ Aph.gov.au/Senators_and_Members/Parliamentarians?MPID=18661.

¹²⁴ *Me ta Matia tou Kristou (Through Christos' Eyes)*, a personal history of the Oakleigh Soccer Club compiled by Chris Babatsias. Undated and self-published.

¹²⁵ Gobbi, HG. 2024. *Holding Shot: The History of Oakleigh Bowling Club 1902–2022*. Oakleigh: Oakleigh Bowling Club Inc, p. 75.

¹²⁶ Photo appears in *Holding Shot* (permission granted from the author).

¹²⁷ Gobbi, *Holding Shot*, p. 76.

¹²⁸ Gobbi, *Holding Shot*, p. 76.

¹²⁹ Stephen Carr, Oakleigh Bowling Club President 2024, provided some information in this section.

¹³⁰ Such as Jerzy ‘George’ B. Zubrzycki AO, a Polish-born Australian sociologist widely regarded as the ‘Father of Australian Multiculturalism’.

¹³¹ www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/our-policy-history

¹³² The paragraphs above summarise the early part of ‘A brief history of Australia’s multicultural policies’ found at www.homeaffairs.gov.au/about-us/our-portfolios/multicultural-affairs/about-multicultural-affairs/our-policy-history.

¹³³ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 9 Feb 1977, p. 19.

¹³⁴ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 6 Apr 1977, p. 3.

¹³⁵ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 6 Apr 1977, p. 3.

¹³⁶ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 20 Apr 1977, p. 1.

¹³⁷ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 4 May 1977, p. 1.

¹³⁸ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 11 May 1977, p. 12.

¹³⁹ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 19 Jan 1977, p. 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 4 Apr 1979, p. 2.

¹⁴¹ The poor quality of this photo is due to the original image in the *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*.

¹⁴² *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 6 Jun 1983, p. 22.

¹⁴³ Gobbi, HG. 2024. *The Centenary History of Hughesdale Primary School 1924–2024*. Hughesdale: Hughesdale Primary School, p. 66 citing Inspector’s Report Book 1966-81, p. 44.

¹⁴⁴ Gobbi, HG. 2024. *The Centenary History of Hughesdale Primary School 1924–2024*, p. 67.

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¹⁴⁵ Gobbi, HG 2024. *The Centenary History of Hughesdale Primary School 1924–2024*, p. 73.

¹⁴⁶ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 15 Aug 1984, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ Making-Multicultural-Victoria_VMC-40-years-report_web_pdf, p. 15, Fig 4. The Ethnic Affairs Commission became the Victorian Multicultural Commission in 1996.

¹⁴⁸ Reflections of a senior member of the community who knew these men well.

¹⁴⁹ These businesses are included in the Eaton Street list in the *Sands and McDougall Directory*, 1974.

¹⁵⁰ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, ‘Little Men want the Mall down’, 31 Jan 1973, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, ‘Mall move fails in Council’, 14 Aug 1973, p. 5.

¹⁵² *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, ‘Looking for Mall money’, 6 Apr 1977, p. 4.

¹⁵³ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, ‘Chamber proposal’, 14 Sept 1977, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, ‘Chamber proposal’, 14 Sept 1977, p. 5.

¹⁵⁵ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, ‘Mall work gets off the ground’, 22 Apr 1987, p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 22 Apr 1987, reported that the State Government would give \$90,000 to the project.

¹⁵⁷ *Standard Times (Oakleigh)*, 11 Nov 1987.

¹⁵⁸ *Oakleigh District Centre Strategic Directions Statement*, September 1995, p. 4. Prepared for the City of Monash by Ratio Consultants, quoting a previous study.

¹⁵⁹ www.outdoordesign.com.au/environment/eaton-mall-project/585.htm : Eaton Mall Project.

¹⁶⁰ <https://vanillalounge.com.au/about-us>

¹⁶¹ Psomiadis, G. “‘The heart of Hellenism’: A Walk through Melbourne’s Greek community in Oakleigh’, *Greek Herald*, 1 February 2023. Comments by Voula who worked at former Eaton Mall café, Kentro.

¹⁶² Psomiadis, G. “‘The heart of Hellenism’”. Comments by Voula’s son who worked at Kentro.

¹⁶³ Psomiadis, G. "The heart of Hellenism". Comments by Eleni Spanou, proprietor of Vanilla café.

¹⁶⁴ Comment made by a member of the community in touch with the older generation.

¹⁶⁵ Psomiadis, G. "The heart of Hellenism." Comments by elderly couple who live in Oakleigh.

¹⁶⁶ Mayor Joy Banerj, 26 Sept 2004. Greek Orthodox Community of Oakleigh and Districts. *Honorary album for the proclamation of Constantine Baltas as honorary President of the Community*. p. 14.

¹⁶⁷ Boland JJ. Memoir written for Oakleigh City Council in 1949, held in archives of History Monash Inc.

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About the author

Ann Nield undertook post-graduate studies in International Relations at the University of Melbourne. She considers herself fortunate to have lived for three years in Athens and upon moving to Oakleigh from Canberra was delighted to find such a strong Greek local community. Ann is Secretary of History Monash Inc. and she writes articles on local history topics.

