

DISCUSSION PAPER

CONSULTATION REQUEST: PLEASE RESPOND TO THE QUESTIONS BY NOVEMBER 28

STRATEGY AND PLAN FOR REVITALISING MODERN GREEK

Pharos Working Party:

Professor Joseph Lo Bianco (Facilitator) • Modern Greek Teachers' Association of Victoria (Chair) • La Trobe University Modern Greek Studies • Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne Victoria • Archdiocesan District of Northcote • Community Languages Victoria • Association of Greek Language Schools Victoria • Observers
c/- MGTAV

Background

Over the past five years the Modern Greek Teachers' Association of Victoria (MGTAV) has led an initiative to investigate the state of teaching and learning of Modern Greek in Victoria. On the basis of commissioned research, the Association then organised workshops, sponsored conferences and debates on the troubling findings. Essentially the overall teaching and learning of Modern Greek at school and tertiary level is in steady decline. Unfortunately, every year the number of programs, teachers and students declines further.

Compounding this loss of systemic provision of Greek in education, Census results confirm a noticeable decline in the number of homes where Greek is the main language of communication, meaning that every year fewer children are raised speaking Greek. This dual challenge of Greek declining in the public education system and retreating in the home domain is a cause of significant concern. On 23 February 2020 the MGTAV released a full set of data from its commissioned research and launched the outlines of a possible strategy at a highly successful media and community event held at Lalor North Primary School. There was extensive media coverage and a great deal of public support for the initiative of a unified strategy to tackle and reverse the trend of decline.

Despite the disruptions of COVID-19 lockdowns, the Association, in collaboration with the Modern Greek Studies Program at La Trobe University, has worked assiduously to build a broad coalition of interested parties from the Greek Australian community, to devise a strategy and plan that can unite the community's efforts. Under the leadership of the Greek Orthodox Community of Melbourne and Victoria (GOCMV) and the MGTAV, a coalition of groups and individuals campaigned to reverse La Trobe's proposal to close its Greek Studies program. On a very welcome note, on 15 December 2020, an accord was signed by the university, the GOCMV and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia to secure the continuation of Modern Greek at La Trobe University. The spirit of this cooperation and decisive action that characterised this achievement, combined with the ongoing efforts of the MGTAV, culminated in two key groups being formed: the La Trobe University & Greek Community Partnership Steering Committee, focusing on supporting the threatened La Trobe University Greek program; and, the Pharos Working Party, focusing on revitalising Modern Greek in Victoria. Comprising all key stakeholders, the Pharos Working Party formed on April 13, 2021, and throughout the winter prepared this strategy plan to disseminate for widespread discussion. The working party received all the findings of the research and recommendations and agreed on this succinct outline for action to secure the long-term future of the Modern Greek language in education and throughout the community.

The intention is to provide a succinct and publicly accessible strategy and plan to unite and coordinate the efforts of the entire community of Greek speaking, Greek identified Australians, allies, and supporters. While the focus is initially on Victoria, we are committed to supporting the emergence of a coordinated, national approach. The working party issues this strategy and plan and seeks your

comments and declarations of commitment. We aim to launch a final strategy on 5 December 2021 for implementation from the commencement of 2022.

Further decline and loss of Greek is not inevitable; evidence of this can be seen in the doubling of enrolment numbers in La Trobe's Greek program over the last three years. The number of teaching programs overall can be increased, the amount of use of the language and its depth and reach can be improved, the interest and commitment of young people to identify with and actively seek opportunities to communicate in Greek can be extended and enriched. It is with this optimism that we have proposed this strategy and plan, aware that only concerted, coordinated and cooperative effort can achieve our shared aim of keeping Greek healthy and prominent in Australia.

Strategy

The general principle behind the strategy is that we need to advance Greek in three broad areas. These are: 1) To build capacity in knowledge of Greek, so that more young people learn the language to a level that gives them confidence to use it; 2) To seek opportunities to deepen and enrich their knowledge of the language; and 3) To connect with the language on a personal level.

Build capacity

This entails ensuring that all current school and university programs in Greek are maintained and that in collaboration with the Victorian government we begin a steady process of expansion, increasing the number of teachers and students. Special effort is required to grow the numbers of students enrolling and persisting with Greek at La Trobe University and bolstering its capacity to produce a steady stream of new teachers. It is also important that the number of substantial bilingual programs grow. The first line of the strategy, therefore, is to concentrate on building capacity. Knowledge of Greek also occurs at home and in families and the second strand to building capacity is to encourage more families to raise their children bilingually and to expand the number of pre-school, kindergarten and out of school language support and maintenance activities. It is important that Greek government efforts to support Modern Greek in Australia expand the range and depth of their activities.

Create opportunities

The second principle of our strategy is to create more opportunities for use of Greek. This requires community organisations, media, clubs, religious activities, and all other Greek Australian bodies to take responsibility for providing immersion opportunities in Greek. These are occasions in which learners are expected or even required to use Greek. In homes this can mean a predictable focus or time or space for conversation in Greek. In elder care and pre-school settings opportunities involve relations of care and nurture such as members' families, professionals, visitors, and others that are both dedicated to Greek and routines of the day. There should be a state-wide pattern of provision of substantial and regular programs of immersion for school students that are linked to education programs and learning, but whose focus is sport, media, recreation, and occupational apprenticeships and internships. What is critical in all these is that the communication should be designed in cooperation with educators to provide, as naturalistically as possible, novice users of Greek full and regular immersion in settings of learning and using and learning through using. To achieve this best, it will be necessary to invite young people to co-design and plan activities, to evaluate them and to continue to offer them so they become a strong accompaniment to formal learning in school.

Foster desire

The third element of the overall strategy shifts attention to the identity and lives of young Greek Australians, and non-Greek background learners to learn Greek according to their identification, wish, desire and motivation. It is anticipated that one outcome of this strategy and plan is the employment of an activities manager who will work with community organisations to create opportunities for use

and with young people on their desires, future plans and sense of motivation and self.

Research

Lo Bianco, J. (2021), *Pharos: The vitality and presence of Modern Greek in contemporary Australia*. Australian Council for Educational Research.

MGTAV, (2020) *A Study of the Vitality and Presence of Modern Greek in Contemporary Australia Language Policy for Modern Greek Education: Focus on Victoria* (Researcher and Author: Joseph Lo Bianco)

Plan

Vision: To expand the use of Modern Greek in the home and its provision in school settings, and to secure its future for generations to come.					
Build Capacity			Create Opportunities		Foster Desire
1. Maintain and expand current School and University programs	2. Establish new programs, particularly Bilingual and Pre-School	3. Support families to raise children bilingually (with Greek)	4. Establish community immersion activities	5. Support families to maintain the use of Greek in the home	6. Create opportunities for young Greek Australians, and non-Greek background learners to learn Greek according to their identification, wish, desire and motivation

BUILD CAPACITY	
1. Maintain and expand current School and University programs	
Objectives	Projects
Issue a statement of excellence in teaching, program design and curriculum innovation to guide all providers of Modern Greek teaching.	Identify programs that fit these categories in a variety of settings.
	Liaise with these programs to create an overall statement of excellence.
	Forward statement of excellence to Greek programs and teachers.
Increase the amount of qualified Greek teaching staff in the short and long term to ensure continuity in the programs that already exist.	Identify ways that individuals can become qualified teachers quickly (i.e., native Greek speakers or those who already hold a Greek qualification could complete a short course to become teachers).
	Provide upcoming generations with information about learning Greek beyond high school and clear career pathways.
	Support new Greek teachers in their roles.
	Raise awareness about the need to maintain the Greek language in schools.

Support seconded teachers from Greece	Request that induction programs for Greek government–seconded teachers be established and maintained.
Increase student numbers in all sectors, but particularly in the day school and University settings.	Run a promotion campaign of schools where Greek is taught.
	Request that the Department of Education support a survey of a large sample of currently enrolled Modern Greek students and that the department assist the MGTAV in tracking the likely post-primary destinations for these students. The aim should be to build the case for cluster-based planning to guarantee continuity into post-primary schools for primary-enrolled students.
	Make representations to the Victorian Minister of Education for Content and Language Integrated Learning-based and inspired training to be delivered by MGTAV to its members.
	Raise awareness about the Greek program on offer at La Trobe University.
	Run a promotion campaign about the benefit of learning Greek in relation to careers.
	Request government support for scholarships for tertiary Modern Greek studies at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
Increase awareness about the value of learning Greek.	Seek sponsorship for Speak Greek awards and aim to establish, with the support of community organisations, the SBS and other relevant agencies, a series of prizes.
	Run a promotion campaign about the value of learning Greek.
Increase contact time in teaching	Communicate with and support Principals and decision makers to keep Greek programs strong and viable.

BUILD CAPACITY

2. Establish new programs, particularly Bilingual and Pre-School

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Projects</i>
Establish new preschool and kindergarten programs.	Build up a database of individuals who would like to create a career in teaching Greek in early childhood. Encourage Greek native speakers to become qualified kinder teachers or encourage Greek speaking kinder teachers to pursue a language qualification.
	Government Early Years initiative to be promoted to preschool providers (particularly in suburbs with a Greek demographic).
	Liaise with Primary Schools that host Greek language programs to set up feeder programs in local kinders.
Establish new Bilingual programs.	Engage with existing Greek programs to see if there is any scope to extend the program into a Bilingual one. Support programs through this process.
	Identify a list of schools or kindergartens that require a language program and begin discussions with these to implement new Greek Bilingual programs.
	Identify schools with a significant Greek demographic and begin discussions with these schools to implement new Greek bilingual programs.
Expand out of school language support and maintenance activities.	Liaise with the Greek teaching community to create a public register of Greek tutors.
	Engage with application providers to create applications in Greek for various age groups.

BUILD CAPACITY

3. Support families to raise children bilingually (with Greek)

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Projects</i>
Raise awareness about the importance of raising children bilingually (specific to Greek).	Run a promotion campaign about the importance of raising children bilingually.
Provide information to families about how they can raise their children bilingually (specific to Greek).	Create a program of bilingual or Greek-first family language practices, liaise with university providers for workshops on problem-solving, ideas sharing, materials, information, and encouragement of bilingual families and how to support Greek learning and maintenance within them.
Create support groups to guide parents to raise their children bilingually (specific to Greek).	Yearly/six monthly/monthly event for parents to meet (social and educational); guided by experts in bilingualism.
	Set up Mothers' Groups with a Greek language focus.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

4. Establish community immersion activities

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Projects</i>
Engage with community organisations to set up regular Greek immersion activities.	Identify organisations that would be interested in running Greek immersion activities.
	Liaise with Greek educators to ensure that communication in these settings is designed to provide full and regular immersion in the language.
	Invite young people to co-design and plan immersion activities, to evaluate them and to continue to offer them so that they become a strong accompaniment to formal learning in school.
Build an MGTAV-sponsored series of targeted (in-country) language study summer/ winter schools as soon and often as possible.	Engage with the Minister for Education for Victoria, the representative of the Greek government and regional and local agencies for financial support.
	Harness local community funds to defray costs and incentivise the scheme.
	Involve Australian-Greek regional associations and suburban communities and request support or financial subsidies for these activities.
	MGTAV to galvanise and request such groups to provide funding scholarships for immersion experiences and other language maintenance schemes.
Organise local/ interstate immersion camps for learners at all levels with a view to networking learners (face-to-face then virtual) and sharing access to the best and most innovative teachers.	Harness local community funds to defray costs and incentivise the scheme.
	Set up school visits and workshops, both intra and interstate.
	Involve Australian-Greek regional associations and suburban communities and request support or financial subsidies for these activities.

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

5. Support families to maintain the use of Greek in the home

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Projects</i>
Provide families with information as to how they can maintain and promote the use of Greek at home.	Create a program of bilingual or Greek-first family language practices, liaise with university providers for workshops on problem-solving, ideas sharing, materials, information, and encouragement of bilingual families and how to support Greek learning and maintenance within them.
	Set up yearly/six monthly/monthly events for parents to meet; guided by experts in bilingualism and focussed on different developmental stages that children undergo.

FOSTER DESIRE

6. Create opportunities for young Greek Australians, and non-Greek background learners to learn Greek according to their identification, wish, desire and motivation

<i>Objectives</i>	<i>Projects</i>
Secure funds to employ an Activities Manager who will work with community organisations to create opportunities for use of Greek and with young people on their desires, future plans and sense of motivation and self.	Liaise with appropriate government bodies (Australian, Greek) to secure funds for this position.
	Activities Manager to liaise with different community groups to set up ongoing Greek immersion activities, based on the interests of young people: Greek theatre, music, choir, art, dance, sport clubs, etc.
	Greek language newspapers and media to dedicate weekly time to student-oriented content promoting learning, internships, and opportunities for use of Greek.

PLEASE REPLY TO THE MGTAV, details below, by 28 November 2021

PLEASE SEND US A RESPONSE TO THE DISCUSSION PAPER AS FOLLOWS

Who are you and what does your organisation represent?

How do you support the idea of a coordinated strategy and plan for Modern Greek? (Please indicate any objectives or projects outlined within the Strategy that you could assist with, and explain how, where necessary).

Are there any specific items of action that you would like to suggest? If so, please describe in a few sentences.

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