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# GREEK TRIBUNE

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## AUSTRALIAN NEWS

### GPs bulk-billing rate drops below 21 per cent

Australia's bulk-billing rate has dropped to 20.7 per cent in early 2025, down from 35.7 per cent two years ago, according to health-care directory service Cleanbill.

Rising costs and the complexity of care have forced many GP clinics to stop bulk billing, leaving patients with higher out-of-pocket expenses averaging 43-dollars-38 per visit.

Tasmania has the highest average cost at 54-dollars-26, and no clinics offering bulk billing for new adult patients without concessions.

About 1.5 million Australians reportedly avoided seeing a doctor

due to costs, exacerbating health inequalities.

Wealthier patients maintained routine care, while others faced lower-quality services at bulk-billing centres.

Health Minister Mark Butler defended Medicare funding, citing a 77.2 per cent bulk-billing rate for individual visits, and increased incentives for concession holders.

Critics, including the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, argued that Medicare underfunding remains a major issue, urging further investment to prevent worsening health outcomes and higher hospital costs.

### Surge in water rescues leads to warnings

Water rescues in Victoria have surged in early 2025, with over 100 incidents in the first week, compared to 17 for the same period in 2024.

Many involve reckless jet ski use, including speeding, close proximity to swimmers, and collisions.

A recent crash at Safety Beach left a 14-year-old boy seriously injured and two others were hospitalised.

Life Saving Victoria reported 145 rescues on a single Saturday, urging greater caution.

Water Police plan increased patrols across Port Phillip Bay and other areas, conducting breath tests, checking marine licenses, and inspecting safety gear such as lifejackets.

Authorities have stressed the need for responsible behaviour to prevent further accidents and injuries during the busy summer season.

### Rise in recreational use of Xanax among young people

Xanax misuse among young Australians is rising, often combined with alcohol, leading to dangerous health risks like seizures, dependency and overdose.

Experts, including Paul Dillon founder of Drug and Alcohol Research and Training Australia (DARTA), have warned of increasing recreational use, fuelled by a growing black market and counterfeit pills laced with harmful substances.

Xanax, a benzodiazepine prescribed for anxiety, can be highly addictive, with withdrawal causing severe symptoms like seizures and nausea.

Mixing Xanax with alcohol or other depressants significantly raises the risk of respiratory failure and overdose.

The Penington Institute, a non-profit organisation supporting drug and alcohol abuse awareness, reported a rise in benzodiazepine-related deaths, with unintentional fatalities increasing from 19 per cent to 32 per cent between 2002 and 2022.

Experts are urging young people to seek professional help for stress and anxiety, instead of self-medicating.

## Jing Lee resigns from SA Liberal party

A senior member of the South Australian Liberal party, Jing Lee has relinquished her roles as the deputy leader of the opposition in the Legislative Council and opposition spokesperson for tourism and multicultural affairs.

In a statement, Ms Lee said she had made the decision after "much consideration".

"Over the Christmas and new year period, I took the time to reflect on my parliamentary and community obligations and responsibilities, what matter most to South Australians, how I can best represent our community and whether we can do politics differently," she wrote.

"From 10 January 2025 onwards, I will be serving as an independent member of the Legislative Council for the remainder of my current term until the next state election in 2026.

"I still have not decided whether I will contest the 2026 election — I want to continue to have that conversation with the

community and stakeholders."

Ms Lee said it had "not been an easy decision" and reflected on the "great honour" it was to be the first Malaysian-Australian elected to the state's parliament 15 years ago.

"I am still as passionate and committed to my community as when I was first elected in 2010," she wrote.

"Continuing to represent our diverse community and industries and working towards a better society and economic prosperity will remain my top priority. She said the decision would enable her to best serve her constituents.

"It's not about the Liberal Party, it's about the current stage of my political career, where I feel I can better serve the community as an independent," she said.

"I wish Vincent Tarzia MP and the Liberal Party every success in all their future undertakings. Having an effective Opposition working with crossbench members



Jing Lee announces resignation from SA Liberal party to become Independent MLC

is in everyone's best interest because it makes the government more accountable, pushes the government to do better and re-think its action and responsibility."

Mr Tarzia said the party were "very saddened" by her decision.

"It's fair to say that I think after 15 years of state politics, it's certainly taken its emotional toll on Jing Lee," he said.

"Jing has been an enormous

figure in the multicultural community, always been a support to me, certainly voted for me recently in the latest leadership ballot."

Ms Lee is the latest to announce her intention to leave the Liberal party, after John Gardner and David Pisoni announced their intentions to quit politics at the next state election, as well as the departure of former leader David Speirs.

## New suburb of Southwark unveiled on West End Brewery site

The large vacant site which was once home to the West End Brewery will become Adelaide's newest suburb, the SA government today announced.

As reported by the ABC, the 8.4-hectare site in Thebarton will be renamed Southwark, which was the suburb's former name.

The \$1-billion housing development will incorporate "up to" 1,300 homes, according to Premier Peter Malinauskas — an increase of 300 on when the project was first announced in September 2023.

Situated between the inner-western suburbs of Thebarton and Hindmarsh and flanked by Port Road and the River Torrens, the site was occupied by the historic West End Brewery until its closure in 2021.

The nearly 140-year-old heritage-listed Brewhouse Tower will form the development's centrepiece and be repurposed as a hospitality and retail venue.

Twenty per cent of the yet-

to-be-built properties in the Southwark project will be earmarked as "affordable" — whereby eligible South Australians with low-to-moderate incomes can procure mortgages which do not exceed 30 per cent of their annual incomes.

Under the state government's current Home Seeker scheme, a selection of properties are adjusted for the market and available at a reduced price for eligible first home buyers and renters.

The minister for housing and urban development Nick Champion acknowledged that at just under \$500,000 — the current "affordable" property rate for Home Seeker SA applicants — that amount was "still a pretty challenging figure".

"But for young people or first home buyers who are getting the stamp duty concession, accessing shared equity through Home Start, you can make it affordable through those measures as well," he said.



The 8.4ha site that was the former West End Brewery will be developed into 1,300 homes

He added that prospective home-owners eligible for the 20 per cent of properties in the new suburb would get "first dibs" through the Home Seeker SA scheme.

While the state government has not yet locked in a contractor to take on the project, it said civil construction was "expected to start within months, with the first residents anticipated to move in by the end of next year".

Opposition housing spokesperson Michelle Lensink criti-

cised the Malinauskas government for its decision to buy the site and manage the project itself, something she said South Australian developers were "very, very disappointed" about.

"The state government doesn't have a plan for the raw materials that will be needed to do the construction that South Australians need to get their foot in the door of housing," Ms Lensink said.

Source: abc.net.au

### New GOCSA Board

The new Administrative Council of the Greek Orthodox Community of South Australia (GOCSA) was appointed on Tuesday 14 January 2025 during a meeting held at the Community's offices in the presence of the 15 elected candidates, the Electoral and Supervisory Committees.

The members of the new Council for 2025-26 are:

President: Peter Ppiros, Vice President: Stan Salagaras, General Secretary: Sylvia Casoudakis, Assistant Secretary: Sophie Diamandi, Treasurer: Emanuel Frossinakis, Assistant Treasurer: Argiro Terizakis.

Members: Penny Anagnostou, Nickolas -Nick-Psarianos, Athanasios Koutelas, Arthas Flavouris, Arthur

## Community Life



The newly elected GOCSA Administrative Council

Galantomos, Peter Gonis, Eleni Mermingis, Vasilios -Bill-Pantelis, Nicholas Glaros.

"I congratulate all candidates

for their participation in the electoral process and I wish all those elected strength and success in the difficult task we have under-

taken," said Mr. Ppiros.

He emphasized that: "it will take a lot of hard voluntary work from all of us and our priorities are, to rebuild the unity of the community, to strengthen and protect the Community's finances, to ensure regular functioning of our churches, and to safeguard the democratic functioning and Community property in accord with our constitution."

The new President highlighted that ecclesiastical issues will be reviewed later on with transparency and always in consultation with the members of the Community.

He added, that in the meetings of the new Administrative Council, the principle of bilingualism - English-Greek - will be adopted as a measure to keep the Greek language alive.

### GREEK COMMUNITY TRIBUNE

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## Cultural, social and political events in South Australia

Contact: Harri on 0484 387 818 - or email your community's news or a photo: info@greektribune.com.au



The Greek Orthodox Community of SA celebrated the Blessing of the Waters on 12 January at Henley Square. A huge crowd attended the annual religious event, including Minister for Multicultural Affairs Zoe Bettison, the Federal Minister for Health & Aged Care Mark Butler MP, Mr Matt Cowdrey MP - Member for Colton, Mira El Dannawi MLC, Frank Pangallo MLC, Lord Mayor Jane Lomax-Smith, Charles Sturt Mayor Angela Evans and members of the GOCSA Administrative Council. The lucky winner to retrieve the cross at the Henley jetty, was the 15-year-old Kristijan Radovanovic

## Australia sees uptick in travellers in 2024

Data released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on international arrivals and departures in 2024, has revealed that the country received an uptick in travellers, with an 11.3 per cent increase in total arrivals, countered by a 12.1 per cent increase in departures.

Arrivals by short-term visitors and returns by residents also rose by more than 10 per cent each on the previ-

ous year.

Australian National University Professor Alan Gamlen says that net overseas migration is declining at a faster rate than it grew after the Covid-19 pandemic, and that the initial surge has passed, with the country now returning to normal movement levels.

ABS data shows that in October 2024, the number of student arrivals to Australia

was 22.2 per cent lower than pre-COVID levels in October 2019.

The federal government hopes to reduce net migration to 260,000 this financial year, and aims to limit the number of foreign students to 270,000 from 2025, with critics arguing that students are being made scapegoats for the national housing crisis.

In January 2020, Australia

had 2.26 million arrivals, dropping to 2.12 million in January 2024.

Departures decreased from 2.19 million in December 2019 to 2.03 million in December 2023.

Short-term departures rose by 13.9 per cent.

New Zealand made up 21 per cent of all visitor arrivals between October 2023 and October 2024, ahead of China and the UK.

### GIORGOS SEFERIS

## The First Greek Poet to Win the Nobel Prize

Greece and the British Museum are reportedly nearing a crucial agreement for the reunification of the Parthenon Marbles, with a potential resolution anticipated as soon as 2025.

Confidential negotiations have yielded significant progress, though a formal deal has yet to be sealed.

Key discussions center on permanently housing the sculptures at Athens' Acropolis Museum while offering major Greek artifacts for extended exhibitions in London.

However, the discussions envision that not all pieces removed by Lord Elgin will return.

Only those essential for reuniting the Parthenon's artistic and historical narrative – such as fragments of the frieze, pediments and metopes – are expected to come back to Athens.

Notably, pieces without direct connection, like the Caryatid from the Erechtheion, will likely remain in Britain.

A critical challenge involves navigating the UK's 1963 law prohibiting permanent artifact removal from national collections.



British Museum officials are pursuing a creative legal framework to comply with this restriction while satisfying Greece's firm opposition to "loans" of the sculptures. This legal compromise is seen as crucial in shielding the agreement from anticipated court challenges.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis underscored the cultural significance of reunification, comparing the fragmented marbles to dividing the Mona Lisa. Currently, approximately half of the Parthenon's

preserved sculptural elements are housed in London, including 16 metopes depicting the Centaur and Lapith battles, key portions of the frieze, and sculptures from the pediments illustrating Athena's birth and her contest with Poseidon.

The discussions also face logistical hurdles: determining the timeline and method for transferring the artifacts.

While unresolved, these issues are considered secondary to the larger legal and diplomatic break-

throughs now within reach. Experts believe that once broader disputes are resolved, these technical matters will be ironed out quickly.

Negotiators are cautiously optimistic that, after decades of contention, both sides can align on a sustainable and mutually respectful solution.

With cultural heritage and international diplomacy at stake, the final steps in this process may hold significant implications for global artifact restitution debates.

## Australian travellers now have to pay to enter the UK

Australians travelling to the United Kingdom must now apply for a digital permit known as an Electronic Travel Authorisation.

Similar to the US ESTA system, the digital permit, which was introduced on 8 January, costs ten pounds, approximately twenty Australian dollars, and allows short visits of up to six months for tourism, business, or study.

The permit is valid for two years and can be obtained online or via an app.

Travellers transiting through the UK

will also require an ETA, but dual British or Irish citizens using their respective passports are exempt.

Applications, which require a passport and photo, typically process within three working days, so early preparation is advised.

Authorities have warned people against scams targeting travellers through fake visa sites.

Australians are urged to apply through the official UK government website or app, and to check Smartraveller for updates before departure.

## Cancer experts concerned about TikTok tanning trend

Some social media influencers are showing off their tan lines and tanning routines across TikTok and Instagram, encouraging other users to burn their skin during high levels of ultraviolet radiation.

Some video clips titled "come and UV tan with me" and with hashtags such as '#SunburnTanLines', have more than 200 million views on TikTok.

They promote the UV index, a measurement of ultraviolet radiation and its potential to damage the body, as a tool rather than a warning, with some users saying that tanning levels between high and extreme, providing the best results.

Sun protection is required for any UV index above level 3, categorised as mode-

rate, as just 15 minutes of unprotected exposure at this level is enough to begin causing skin damage.

Research by the Cancer Council shows the majority of people aged 18 to 30 desire a tan, and almost 9 in 10 intentionally or unintentionally tan.

Cancer Council CEO Mark Nevin says that the glamorisation of a sun tanning culture is concerning, as this behaviour increases the risk of developing skin cancer.

A new campaign by the Cancer Council and the Australian Government, titled 'End the Trend', urges Australians to stop normalising suntans.

Nearly 2,000 Australians die from skin cancer every year, equivalent to one death every six hours.

## Underage children in adult watch houses rise by 50 per cent in QLD

The number of children aged 13 years and under, held in Queensland's adult watch houses, rose by 50 per cent over a 12-month period in 2023-2024, with 120 children aged 10-13 detained overnight, according to new statistics tabled in State Parliament on Tuesday.

Overcrowding worsened after stricter bail laws came into effect, with 675 children detained for over four consecutive nights.

Watch houses, designed for short-term adult detention, have been criticised as harmful and inadequate for children, leading to issues like self-harm, behavioural incidents,

and police misconduct. Most detained children are on remand, not convicted, with many experiencing neglect or abuse.

Advocacy groups have highlighted inadequate care, including poor health support and prolonged stays.

Of the 33 children in watch houses on Tuesday, 24 were First Nations.

Although ruled unlawful in 2023, state laws retroactively permitted the practice.

Premier David Crisafulli promised fewer children in watch houses by the end of his term, but acknowledged tougher laws would increase youth incarceration in the short-term.