



September 2024

# GREEK TRIBUNE

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## AUSTRALIAN NEWS

### Special schools to stay despite calls for their closure

Federal NDIS Minister Bill Shorten said he doesn't accept all students in special schools are struggling. This comes despite disability advocates calling for the schools to be phased out.

The inquiry's two commissioners wrote, as part of their recommendations, that segregated education prevented inclusive education.

However, Minister Shorten said he backed families having a choice in deciding whether the

mainstream system was best for their child.

In response to the Disability Royal Commission's recommendation that special schools be phased by the end of 2051, the government did not commit to implementing it.

Disability advocates have expressed extreme disappointment at the government's response to the inquiry, with only 13 of the 222 recommendations having been accepted in full.

### Concerns over Australia's car licensing system

Concerns are growing over Australia's car licensing system, with claims of widespread cheating and inadequate testing.

Learner drivers are required to log 120 hours of supervised driving before taking their practical test, but in regional Victoria, without the need for an accredited instructor, some drivers are bypassing proper training.

This loophole is believed to contribute to unsafe driving hab-

its and be undermining road safety.

Calls for reform are growing, with suggestions to improve training and testing to enhance driver competency and reduce fatalities on the roads.

Critics argue for stricter licensing standards, drawing on examples from countries like Germany.

Former assessors also highlighted issues like instructors aiding test-takers and assessors being lax in their duties.

### Police union threatens to disrupt Parliament over pay

Members of the Australian Federal Police have threatened to strike over poor pay and conditions, following their rejection of a 11.2 per cent pay increase over three years.

The AFP Association, which represents Australian Federal Police officers, labelled the offer as "toxic", with President Alex Caruana warning that parliament might need to "shut down" if officers temporarily abandon duties to protest the deal.

At the Fair Work Commission, the Federal Police vowed to strenuously oppose any protected indu-

strials action by officers that could disrupt parliamentary proceedings.

Independent Senators Jacqui Lambie and David Pocock have backed the union, urging the government to intervene.

The AFP cautioned against rhetoric, suggesting lawful withdrawal of resources, emphasising potential public and stakeholder impact.

The dispute highlights growing tensions over pay and conditions, with some officers considering leaving the force immediately, if their demands are not met.

## Grape growers switching to olives

Between rows of old vines in Australia's biggest wine region, a new crop of olive trees is showing green shoots for an industry in crisis, according to ABC Riverland.

Under a grey winter sky, the brown nubs of the vines await pruning ahead of the next vintage in South Australia's Riverland.

But with some grape growers facing another year of prices below cost of production, Ashley Ratcliff has taken action by planting olive trees in his vineyard.

"We could see that olive oil was something that we could sell direct to our consumers, and so we looked at olives as the next offering in our mix", he said.

The super high-density trees Mr Ratcliff has planted can produce fruit in two years — about half the time of a regular olive tree — and he can keep using his existing vineyard infrastructure and equipment.

The viticulturist, whose business grows about 50 grape varieties, said he had always done things differently and he hoped others will follow suit.

"We've got a contract with



Riverland growers looking to replace unviable grape vines with olive trees

a producer wholesaler and we're going to get some of our growers to also plant olives," he said.

"Some of their backgrounds ... are Greek and Italian, so they're quite excited to do something that maybe their grandparents did many years ago."

While the world has been drinking less wine, demand for olive oil has grown.

Extreme weather and

disease has created a global shortage of olive oil, something grape and bulk wine sales broker Chantel Kitsenkas has seen as an opportunity.

"Australia consumes more than double its own production of olive oil and we're relying on a lot of imports outside of the Mediterranean," she said.

"We're only producing about 2 million litres, so if we can make that up with our own

Australian-made products then that would be a great start."

To cater to this demand, Ms Kistenkas has been working with a local council in the Riverland to find growers willing to swap grapes for olives to produce oil.

With cost-of-living pressures also biting amid the wine downturn, Berri Barmera Council mayor Ella Winnall said diversifying crops was important.

## South Australian Liberals elect Vincent Tarzia as new leader

Vincent Tarzia has been elected by his SA Liberal colleagues to the party leadership, following the resignation of David Speirs.

At an internal Liberal vote held last week, Mr Tarzia defeated Josh Teague for the party's top job, by 18 votes to four, after deputy leader John Gardner announced he would not contest.

South Australia's newly elected Liberal leader Vincent Tarzia has described his rise to the party's top job as an opportunity to "refresh" and "refocus", but insisted he "absolutely did not undermine" predecessor David Speirs.

Mr Speirs threatened to quit the party should certain unnamed parliamentary colleagues be "rewarded" in last week's leadership spill.

But Mr Tarzia was today adamant he had "not at all

engaged in machinations to undermine Mr Speirs's leadership.

"I absolutely did not undermine David, and I consider David a friend, and I want to work with David in the Liberal Party", he said.

Mr Tarzia used his first media conference as leader to lay down his priorities, saying it was the "greatest privilege of my professional life" to take on the job.

He said he wanted to extend an "olive branch" to the Ambulance Employees Association to work to fix ramping.

"I want to reach out to the ambulance union.

Mr Tarzia did not shy away from talking up the party's chances of success at the next state election.

"I'm going to work hard every day with a strong team



New Liberal Leader Vincent Tarzia, left and David Speirs

behind me to take up the fight to Labor and to make sure that the Liberal Party wins the state election in 2026," he said.

Member for Chaffey Tim Whetstone applauded the outcome of today's ballot, saying it was a "good decision".

"Vincent's put his hand up,

he was given overwhelming support, and we move on," he said.

Transport Minister Tom Koutsantonis said Mr Tarzia has taken South Australians for granted by declaring he would win the next election without releasing any policies so far.

### A moment that made history!

A pivotal moment in the history of Australia or, as songwriters Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody put it in 1993, "From little things big things grow!"

On the 16th of August, 49 years ago, Labor Prime Minister Gough Whitlam (1916-2014) and Vincent Lingiari (1908-1988) made history. By giving land back to the Gurindji people, it marked the first time an Australian Prime Minister acknowledged Aboriginal landrights.

## Community Life



Gough Whitlam said in 2009: I have no happier memory than the occasion at Daguragu in August 1975 when I handed documents to Vincent Lingiari and poured earth into his hands with these words:

"I solemnly hand to you these deeds as proof, in Australian law, that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and I put into your hands this piece of the earth itself as a sign that we restore them to you and your children forever"

Vincent Lingiari replied: "We are all mates now".

Kostas Karamarkos

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**LEFT: The Justice for Cyprus Committee of SA commemorated the 50th anniversary of the Turkish occupation, with a series of events, including a public meeting at the Cyprus club where the Citizen's Commissioner Panayiotis Palates spoke to a gathering of about 100 people on the recent political developments in Cyprus**



**ABOVE: The representative of the Government of Cyprus Panayiotis Palates, left, and the Cyprus High Commissioner Antonis Sammoutis spoke at the forum**



**ABOVE: Frank Pangallo SA Best MLC addressing the gathering at the Cyprus club on 24 July. To the left, Mira El Dannawi Labor MLC, also attended the forum.**

## Thousands of children homeless in 'national shame'

A new report from Homelessness Australia has found that the number of children in Australia who are homeless, has increased to more than 25-thousand, accounting for more than 20 per cent of Australia's homeless population.

Evidence indicates that in some instances children have been forced to 'couch surf' to escape domestic violence situations, with the dire state of housing affordability exacerbating the problem.

Kate Colvin, Chief Executive of Homelessness Australia,

has described the current state of affairs as a national shame, urging the Federal Government to develop an action plan to unite various child-focused services.

Australia currently sits at 32 out of 38 OECD nations in a measure of child wellbeing.

Incoming Housing and Homelessness Minister Clare O'Neil, told a forum of homelessness experts that the task ahead was huge, but noted that an "avalanche of policy work" on the horizon would have an impact.

## Falling international student numbers spark warnings of job cuts

Universities are warning that thousands of jobs could be cut as a result of a cap on international student numbers.

This comes as the government continues with its plan to cap international student numbers, a policy the institutions say will have a catastrophic effect.

The federal government has already tightened visa rules to make it harder for international students to come to the country.

In May, Education Minister Jason Clare

announced that the government would seek to set caps on the number of international students able to enrol in universities and colleges.

Universities Australia chief executive Luke Sheehy told a parliamentary inquiry the government was unfairly blaming international students for the country's current housing crisis.

He said the legislation could end up leading to as many as 14-thousand job losses in the sector, and a huge financial loss to the community.

## 50 percent increase in youth mental health issues

A global review, by the Lancet Psychiatry Commission, on youth mental health, condemns the lack of action, with severe consequences for young people's wellbeing and productivity.

The report, led by Professor Patrick McGorry, highlighted a 50 per cent rise in mental health issues among youth over the past 15 to 20 years, blaming inadequate government response for the

increase.

The report calls for scaling up evidence-based solutions, noting that 39 per cent of young Australians have treatable mental conditions, but only half receive care.

Global megatrends like inequality, financial pressure, and social media are worsening the crisis, with urgent reforms needed to address the growing mental health burden.

## Call for regular health checks for doctors over 70

Older doctors may soon face mandatory regular health check-ups due to rising complaints against those aged over 70. The Medical Board of Australia noted doctors aged over 70 are 81 per cent more likely to face complaints.

The Board proposed a general health check by a GP every three years for those in their 70s and annually for

those aged over 80. Dr. Anne Tonkin, Board Chair, said this will ensure patient safety and benefit doctors.

Some doctors however, have argued that competency, not age, should be the criterion.

The Australian Medical Association has also emphasised that health checks must be fair and not force early retirement.

## Fires tore through 100,000 acres of forests

There are no longer any active wildfires in the wider Athens area, but officials remain on high alert, Greece's chief fire brigade spokesman has said.

Milder winds and extensive efforts by the emergency services have helped bring the blazes under control.

One woman died and dozens more people - including firefighters - were injured after the fires tore through 100,000 acres (40,470 hectares) of land. Thousands of local residents have been evacuated.

The Greek authorities are now assessing the damage and preparing compensation schemes for affected residents as well as businesses.

The interior ministry has allocated €4.7m in emergency funding to areas affected by wildfires though less than 10% of the burnt land is forested, according to reports in Greek media.

More than 700 firefighters, 199 fire engines and 35 water-bombing aircraft have been involved altogether in efforts to extinguish the fires, which first broke out on Sunday afternoon about 35km (22 miles) north of the Greek capital.

By Monday, blazes were confirmed in 40 different locations, with some areas seeing flames as high as 25m (82ft).

Though the fires have largely abated, firefighters are continuing to douse the ground and maintain a strong presence in the capital region.

Suburbs including Nea

Penteli, Vrilissia and Patima Halandriou are among the worst affected areas.

One Nea Penteli resident, Marina, described how she had been forced to flee her own neighbourhood in Nea Penteli for a nearby town, only to be evacuated a second time as the flames reached there too.

"My friend's house - he probably lost everything: he has no belongings. And while everything was happening, even our school burned down. All our memories were there," she said.

In Vrilissia, just 14km (8 miles) from central Athens, buildings and businesses were left gutted by the flames,

The body of a 63-year-old woman was found in a burned-out factory in nearby Patima Halandriou.

Colleagues said she had been too scared to jump from the building as the flames came close and was then trapped inside.

In the wake of the wildfires that have ripped through Attica in recent years, experts insist that successful reforestation requires meticulous studies tailored to the specific areas that have been burnt.

"Not all forests or woodlands are in the same condition. They don't have the same fire history. There are those that have burned multiple times and others that have burned less frequently, because unfortunately all of northeast Attica has been



repeatedly affected by fire. There are tall mature forests. There are areas that have burned before but have regenerated naturally. There cannot be a single approach, a detailed check is required, with a record of the history and land uses of each area," says Margarita Arianoutsou, emeritus professor of ecology in the Department of Biology of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. She notes that in cases where the time since the previous fire is 15 years or more, "we do not need to do anything, as the Aleppo pine forests, which grow in Attica, have the possibility of natural regeneration under certain conditions."

Arianoutsou stressed that any use other than forestry must be prevented. Affected areas must be declared within two months as places that will

be reforested. The only thing that needs to be done, she maintains, is appropriate interventions to contain soil erosion, against floods etc.

The BEYOND unit of the Institute for Astronomy, Astrophysics, Space Applications and Remote Sensing of the Athens Observatory identified 99 scorched areas left behind by the fire in northeastern Attica on August 11-12. The mixed forest and peri-urban forest area covers 48 hectares.

This includes 39% transitional forest and shrubland, 26% hardwood vegetation, as well as 19.5% in areas with sparse vegetation and scattered buildings, 12% agricultural land, and 3.5% discontinuous urban building. According to BEYOND, it was the second worst fire in burnt land that has occurred in Attica after that