



Australian Hellenic Council NSW Inc.

A coordinating body for the Australian Hellenic community

PO BOX 433 EARLWOOD NSW 2206

Tel: 0403 053 900

Email: georgev@championhomes.com.au
nsw@helleniccouncil.org.au

Website: www.helleniccouncil.org.au

Twitter: [@VardasGeorge](https://twitter.com/VardasGeorge)

MEDIA RELEASE

THE MACEDONIAN NAME DISPUTE IS NO BURNING ISSUE

The Australian Hellenic Council deplores the actions of radical ultra-nationalists in demonstrations held in Sydney and Melbourne in support of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (fYROM).

The Macedonian naming issue is now being discussed at government to government level between Athens and Skopje as both nations try to find a mutually acceptable resolution after years of belicose actions by the former Gruevski government which had embarked upon a policy of “antiquisation” by appropriating Hellenic history and symbols of statehood and seeking to portray SlavMacedonians as the heirs to the Macedonian Hellenes of antiquity. This provocation included the fanning of irredentist aspirations of a so-called Greater Macedonia stretching into Greece and absorbing surrounding areas.

In recent times diplomatic efforts have been renewed. The new fYROM government has taken positive steps to reverse this fabrication of history by discarding the name Alexander the Great from its international airport, taking down Greek statues and renouncing inappropriate claims to Hellenic identity. The government in Athens for its part is openly courting a possible resolution based on the adoption of a composite name with a geographical qualifier (such as permutations of Northern Macedonia, Upper Macedonia or Vardar Macedonia) and the express disavowal by fYROM of any and all claims upon Hellenic identity, culture and territory.



Whilst these moves have met with some resistance on both sides, the spectre of Greek flags being burned in the streets of Melbourne and Greeks being racially vilified – all supposedly in the name of ... a name – is simply deplorable and merely plays into extremists' hands.

The issue of the Macedonian name should not be the domain of such extremists and jingoists who are content to resort to populist and ultranationalist rhetoric, including the use of derisive symbols (such as Nazi insignia) and racist hate speech, to incite violence and hatred. The ugly face of Balkanisation has no place in Australia.

The Australian Hellenic Council strongly urges restraint and common sense to allow a diplomatic solution to be properly explored and hopefully found without resort to the ugly face of ultra nationalist fervour disguised as patriotism.

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George Vellis
NSW Co-Ordinator, Australian Hellenic Council (NSW)

George Vardas
Secretary, Australian Hellenic Council (NSW)