



**MACEDONIAN COMMUNITY OF ADELAIDE  
& SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC. (Reg. A1880)**

148 Crittenden Road Findon 5023 South Australia  
P.O. Box 291 Findon 5023 South Australia  
Tel & Fax : (+61- 8) 8347 1401 ; ABN : 34053674903  
Website: [www.macedoniancommunitysa.org.au](http://www.macedoniancommunitysa.org.au)  
Email: [president@macedoniancommunitysa.org.au](mailto:president@macedoniancommunitysa.org.au)

24 July 2019

[REDACTED]  
By Email : [REDACTED]

(Mobile : [REDACTED])

Dear [REDACTED]

**Re : Your complaint about our Flag and Symbols / Macedonian Community Centre, Findon**

Thank you for your letter of complaint received by way of our (under construction 'Beta') website on 18 July 2019.

The letter was discussed at a routine meeting of our Executive Committee on 22 July 2019. As the prevailing view was that the tenor of the said letter was genuine and conciliatory, we have been directed to respectfully provide you with this response.

We make the following points for your consideration :

1. The Prespa Agreement was executed bi-laterally by the governments of Macedonia and Greece in mid-2018. It has subsequently been approved by the respective parliaments, and various consequential enactments have been brought down by the Macedonian side. Under international law, the Agreement is binding only upon the executing parties to its agreed terms and conditions, that is, the Republics of (North) Macedonia and Greece. As this organization (Macedonian Community of Adelaide & SA Inc.) is not a state or governmental institution of the Republic of (North) Macedonia, it is not bound legally by its terms, which are not enforceable against it, or against any individual who is a member.
2. As you may well appreciate, in any event, there is significant evidence which supports the fact that the Agreement does not enjoy majority support in either Macedonia or Greece, nor amongst the émigré population of those two states. The entering into of the Agreement, and its subsequent parliamentary ratification, was attributable largely to geo-political pressures applied to both countries by the United Nations, but in particular, by the USA and the EU. The recent national elections in Greece (July 2019) as you well know, have replaced the Tsipras-led government which signed the accords. In Macedonia, support for the Agreement has not yet been fully tested electorally in that country by way of similar national elections, although both a plebiscite and recent Presidential elections, saw the successful orchestration of boycotts (against the

Agreement) which saw only approximately 40% of voters turn out. Accordingly, although core provisions of the Agreement are expressed to be "irrevocable" legally, and their application is "ergo omnes", what awaits the Agreement's aftermath politically remains to be seen. In the interim, both governments retain a highly dubious mandate on this issue until further trends become clearer.

- There is a subtle but nonetheless important distinction between the symbols "*Star of Vergina*" and "*Sun of Kutlesh*", both in their historical applications and in their appearances. The "Sun" has been used as a symbol of the modern Macedonian movement for a significant period, and does not solely emanate from its official usage (in one form) on the flag of the Republic of Macedonia between 1991 and 1995, when the current flag was adopted by the Republic as a result of the interim accords between Macedonia and Greece.

4. As stated, neither our Community organization, nor Macedonians living permanently in Adelaide and South Australia, have any necessarily binding connection (on any level) with the Republic of (North) Macedonia. Indeed, our members, and the broader Macedonian community in this state, although smaller in number than our counterparts in other Australian states and territories, emanate from the various parts of Macedonia. While bound by our common Macedonian culture, language, ethnic identity and national consciousness, it is nonetheless the case that only a minority percentage of our people here have origins from the Republic of (North) Macedonia. Indeed, the majority of our original settlers here, and the founders of our organization in 1947, originated from the part of Macedonia which today lies within the political boundaries of Greece. Greece has officially referred to this province as "Greek Macedonia" or "Macedonia" only since 1988, while in our Macedonian language, we refer to this part of northern Greece as "Aegean Macedonia", in order to differentiate ourselves ethnically, culturally and linguistically from persons of Greek origin who refer to themselves as "Greek Macedonians" or "Greeks from Macedonia". We also have smaller numbers resident here in Adelaide, whose origins are from parts of Macedonia which today fall within the political boundaries of Bulgaria and Albania. Those states also refer to these territories administratively as "Macedonia", while our people use the terminology "Pirin Macedonia" (Bulgaria) and "(Mala) Prespa Macedonia" (Albania). Incidentally, use of these terms does not make us "irredentist". As our Community constitution attests, rather than obsessively focusing on "territory" (which more often than not tragically invokes war), our policies are instead rooted in the preferable universality of practices about human rights and fundamental freedoms, which have been biblically enshrined in international law.

So to describe our organization and its members, for these reasons, as being descendant in some manner from the Republic of (North) Macedonia, and therefore bound by its official edicts and actions, is a gross over-simplification, and essentially erroneous. Our Community organization reflects a far wider and more extensive derivation, and this is reflected quite often in our dialects, customs and regional

practices, despite all comfortably coming under the common **Macedonian** national and ethno-cultural banner. Indeed, this is not uncommon, as many peoples of the same origin, across all continents in this regard, have been divided historically across a number of different contiguous states, by factors and events beyond their control. For example, the Kurds, with a strongly identifiable national culture and consciousness, live across the four parts of Kurdistan, within the modern political boundaries of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria, where they have varying degrees of autonomy and national/minority rights.

Furthermore, as you will no doubt know, the key provisions of Article 7 of the Prespa Agreement now effectively introduce legally the acceptance and consent of the Greek side ( for the very first time ever ) of the Macedonian right to subjectively use the terminology "*Macedonia/Macedonian*" as a descriptor nationally, culturally and linguistically, of the Macedonian people. The quid pro quo of course was, inter alia, the adoption of the name "Republic of North Macedonia" for the state.

5. In Australia, Macedonians have been long-settled, and together with their Greek counterparts, have made a profound contribution to cultural diversity, which has been the key building block for the promulgation of our nation's multicultural policies and practices since the early 1970s. The cornerstone of these policies and practices, which are now enshrined in many laws and other instruments, is the recognition and acceptance that Australian residents are able to subjectively interpret and apply in their daily lives their respective heritage in a modern, plural context, and to demand protection for these rights and freedoms should that be required. The quid pro quo in this abiding 'social contract' is that we all in turn accept and promote Australian laws, the prevailing political system, and the general ethos and values of our broader Australian community. Equally, respect for each others' rights in this regard is also clearly non-negotiable.

Accordingly, we have now travelled well beyond the anachronistic policies and practices where we can simply deny that certain people (and their cultures) "exist" in order to deflect demands for according to them national and/or minority rights. Indeed, somewhat ironically, even the Prespa Agreement, in its own way and despite its unpopularity, has abetted the cause of consigning such odious political practices to the dustbin of history.

6. As such, Australians of Macedonian origin, will continue to contribute to the development of this country's dynamic and diverse socio-cultural fabric. Our **Macedonian** language has been taught for many years at all educational levels in Australia. Our cultural values and practices are also exhibited, in both traditional folk and more modern contexts, in a manner for all Australians to enjoy, including Australians of Greek origin. In no small measure then does our own Community organization, plan to continue to enable this valuable contribution across the board.

Accordingly, [redacted] we politely but firmly reject your invitation to desist from deploying our national and cultural symbols. We imagine that this would equally be the response of any other proud and dignified group in such circumstances, including Australians of Greek origin. The rights of both groups and individuals, in the present global society, should never be cynically predicated upon asserting or proving "ownership" of often mythical vestiges of antiquity.

We would be pleased to discuss these issues further, in person or by telephone for convenience, should you so wish. That is the least that we can all do as proud and decent Australians.

We reserve all rights.

Kind Regards,



A. Michael Radin

President



Mary Naoum-Perla

Secretary

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### Macedonian Orthodox Church "St. Naum of Ohrid"

\* Macedonian Council of SA \* Association of Refugee Children from the Aegean region of Macedonia (SA) \* Board of Life Members \* Macedonian Social Club "Iriden" Inc. \* "Macedonian United Soccer Club" \* Cultural Society "BKR" \* Macedonian School "St. Kiril & Metod" \* Macedonian Senior Citizens \* Women's Section \* Youth Group



\* Society of Macedonian Professionals "Vox" \* Macedonian Heritage Movement "Spur" \* Folklore Ensemble "Slo" \* Macedonian Community Media: Radio & TV Programs \* Human Rights Committee (SA) \* Welfare Committee \* Village Committees: "Kator" "Peshobrista" "Visheri" \*