

The Sustainability of Greek Economic and Social Prosperity in Adelaide's Inner Western Suburbs*

Arthur Spassis

This paper outlines the results of an economic and social research study in selected inner western suburbs of Adelaide undertaken in 2007. The study area was chosen due to the dominant presence of Greek businesses and social institutions located in the inner suburbs of Adelaide. Businesses and social institutions willing to participate provided case studies to represent Greek contributions arising from Greek immigration into the region. The incorporation of business and social institution survey questionnaires paved the way in determining if the selected Greek business and social institution contributions can be sustained. In general, results indicated that the participating Greek social institutions in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide are in a more vulnerable position than Greek businesses.

Aim

The goal of the research study was to determine if the selected sample of Greek business and social institution participants can continue their contribution and legacy into the future.

Background

This research study was the first of its kind to be conducted at Flinders University for the Adelaide region. The sample area of study was composed of thirteen selected inner western suburbs of Adelaide. These selected suburbs were chosen because of the dominant Greek business and social institution presence. Hence, this created an

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optimal study area to determine if economic and social contributions could be continued into the future.

It must be stated that the strong Greek presence in the selected study area is largely a product of migration into the inner western suburbs of Adelaide (Burnley, 2001). A fundamental factor that initiated the Greek immigration transition process was the devastating impact of World War Two (Dimitreas, 1998). Poverty and a lack of appropriate living conditions were the key ingredients that simultaneously resulted in Greek citizens emigrating. In essence, Greece was in a state of political disarray and was in desperate need of economic support, with major restructuring a necessary requirement. Greek citizens needed urgently to establish a better life for their families and themselves, and hence could not wait for Greece's revitalisation program to be complete.

It is interesting to note that the differential pattern of immigrant settlement in Australia can to a large extent be explained as being determined by ethnic status (Forster, 2004). In other words, migrants settling from a particular village of a country prefer to reside in a common area. In light of this, Greek immigrants who settled in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide adhered to this trend of ethnic residential status. Burnley (2001) notes that the first inner western suburb of Adelaide settled by Greek immigrants was the suburb of Thebarton. This location behaved as a predecessor for other adjacent suburbs such as Torrensvile and Mile End to later become settled by Greek migrants.

It is important to note that the presence of social capital amongst Greek migrants in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide catalysed today's Greek economic and social prosperity. In substance, social capital is commonly understood as being a form of resource developed by people who interactively cooperate with one another to reach an understanding and share a sense of trust (Falk and Harrison, 2003). Figure 1 shows the outcomes formulated from social capital, as a result of Greek community interaction in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide. These formulations are as follows: a) religious institutions, for example St George Orthodox Church, b) educational institutions, for example St George College, c) social institutions, for example the Pan-Macedonian Society and c) business development, for example the Cyprus Bank of Australia.

Figure 1: *The outcome of social capital in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide*

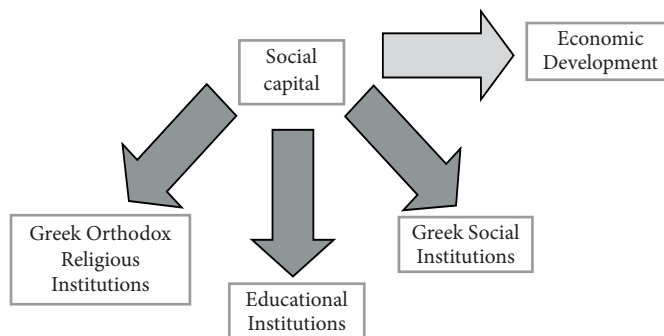
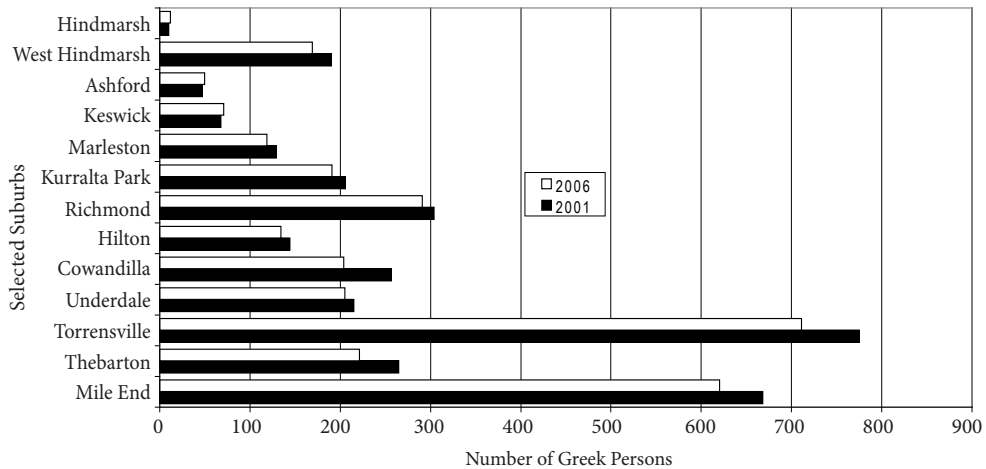


Figure 2: *The number of persons with Greek ancestry in the selected study area in 2001 and 2006*



Source: Adapted by A. Spassis, ABS Census, Basic Community Profiles, 2001 & 2006

The thirteen inner western suburbs incorporated in the research study are revealed in Figure 2. It shows the number of persons having Greek ancestry in the selected study area, adapted from the 2001 and 2006 censuses respectively. It can be clearly seen that the suburb of Torrensville had the highest proportion in both 2001 and 2006. Although this is clearly evident, the 2006 data indicates a slight decrease in Greek persons residing in Torrensville in comparison to the 2001 data. Furthermore, the suburb of Mile End has the second highest population of Greek ancestry in both 2001 and 2006. Similar to the suburb of Torrensville, the 2006 data also indicates a slightly diminished figure for Mile End. Although it was previously stated in this paper that the earliest and most dominant Greek migrant settlement in the inner western suburbs was Thebarton, Figure 2 shows that this has been surpassed. Torrensville, Mile End and Richmond have overtaken Thebarton in both the 2001 and 2006 census periods. In general all selected suburbs apart from Keswick, Ashford and Hindmarsh (which have only slightly increased) show decreases in the population having Greek ancestry from the 2001 to the 2006 census periods respectively.

Methodology

The research study required the input of Greek business and social institution participants in the selected suburbs of the inner western suburbs of Adelaide. The method of approach entailed recruiting willing persons from Greek businesses and social institutions to participate in the research study. The initial stage involved personally visiting potential participants in order to explain the purpose of the research and to persuade them to participate in it. It must be stated that the recruitment of Greek business

participants in the selected study area proved to be a difficult task. Only three Greek businesses were keen to be interviewed and participate in the research study. These interviews formulated case studies to represent Greek economic contributions in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide. Unfortunately, four well known Greek businesses which were approached refused to be a part of the study.

Conversely, the recruiting of Greek social institution participants did not prove to be such a demanding and difficult task as was the recruiting of business participants. Five social institution participants were easily recruited to formulate case studies to represent Greek social institution contributions in the inner western suburbs. Once social institution participants were recruited, convenient times were arranged in order to conduct an interview.

In addition to the business and social institution case studies, a business and social institution survey questionnaire was completed by all case study participants. An extra five Greek businesses who had not already refused to participate, along with an extra three Greek social institution participants were personally recruited from other suburbs of the study area. This made a total sample of eight businesses and eight social institution participants who provided active and valuable responses.

The field exercise also included the recruitment of key actors in local government to participate in a key actor survey questionnaire. Three key actors were approached in the local government area of West Torrens, but unfortunately for the purposes of the research study two potential key actors declined participation.

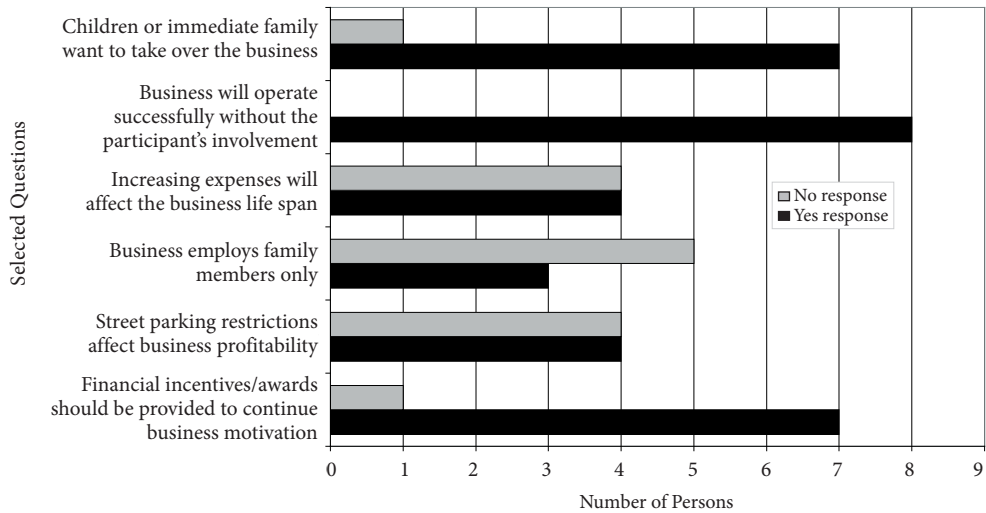
Analysis of research findings

Selected participant responses to the business survey questionnaire

Figure 3 clearly shows that seven participants from a total sample of eight who took part in the business survey questionnaire responded that their children or immediate family are interested in taking over the business reins in the future. This response accounts for 88% of the total participants surveyed. This clearly shows that there is a degree of confidence amongst the next generation to continue their family business into the future.

All participants responded in the business survey questionnaire that their business will continue to operate successfully without their involvement in the future. This shows that all businesses that participated in the research study are strongly consolidated and functioning to their expectations. From Figure 3 it is evident that three out of eight participants surveyed (38%) indicated that they employ family members only. Conversely, this means that five out of eight business participants surveyed (62%) are responsible for creating employment opportunities in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide.

Figure 3: Selected participant Yes/No responses to the business survey questionnaire 2007



An issue of concern that emanated from the study was that 50% of participants surveyed agreed that increasing business expenses will most definitely contribute towards a diminishing future life span of their business. Figure 3 also highlights that 50% of business participants surveyed responded that limited customer street parking availability affects business profitability. Furthermore, seven businesses surveyed from a total sample of eight (88%), responded that financial incentives and or award presentations are good notions for the continual motivation of businesses in the region.

Table 1 shows that all eight business participants (100%) agreed that their business productivity and efficiency had improved over time. It is interesting to note that from Table 1, 75% of participants agreed that competition between similar Greek businesses is an issue of concern. Conversely, only 25% were confident that competition between similar Greek businesses is a not of concern.

Table 1: Selected participant agree/disagree responses to the business survey questionnaire 2007

Selected questions asked of participants	participants agreeing	% of total agreeing	participants not agreeing	% of total not agreeing	total sample
The number of Greek businesses is increasing in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide	7	87.5	1	12.5	8
Competition between similar Greek businesses is a concern in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide	6	75	2	25	8
Business productivity and efficiency has improved over time	8	100	nil	nil	8
There is good interaction between Greek and non-Greek businesses in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide	8	100	nil	nil	8

From Table 1, it can be clearly seen that seven participants from a total sample of eight (88%) responded that the number of Greek businesses in the inner suburbs of Adelaide is increasing. Conversely, approximately 12% of participants responded that they did not agree the number of Greek businesses is increasing in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide. A positive sign from Table 1 is that all participants agreed that there was a good relationship between Greek and non-Greek businesses in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide.

Table 2: *Selected participant responses extracted from the business survey questionnaire 2007*

	number of participant responses	% of total participants
participant's parents migrated from Greece	6	75
participant born in Greece	5	62.5
Greek migration has contributed to economic development	8	100
Business passed down from former generation	2	25
total participants	8	

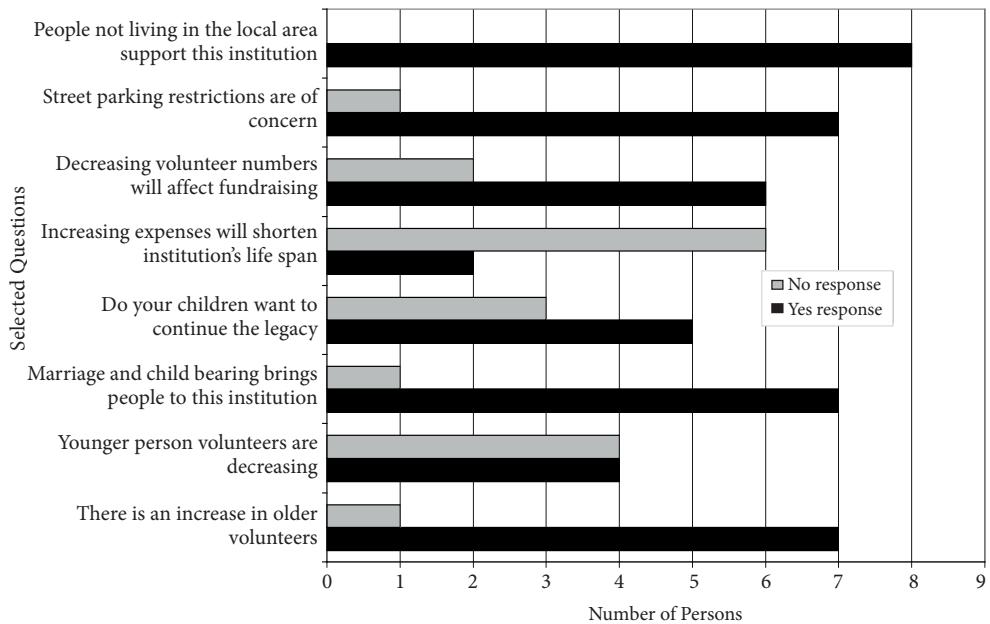
Table 2 shows that five out of a total sample of eight participants (63%) were born in Greece and migrated to the inner western suburbs of Adelaide. Furthermore, 75% of participants surveyed indicated that their parents were Greek migrants. From a total sample of eight participants, only two participants (25%) highlighted that their business was handed down from a former generation. The final note in regards to Table 2 is that all the eight participants interviewed strongly felt that Greek immigrants have contributed towards the economic development of the inner western suburbs of Adelaide.

The three business case studies which were derived from interviewing business participants in the selected study area clearly identified that: a) business participants felt they were from a Greek background simply from being a part of the business, b) business participants were inspired to successfully operate their business, and c) the participants' businesses exhibited Greek culture in the community.

Selected participant responses to social institution survey questionnaire

Figure 4 clearly shows that all eight participants responded that Greek persons not residing in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide support their respective social institution. Furthermore, seven participants from a total sample of eight (88%) indicated that the life cycle of marriage and child bearing attracts people to social institutions.

Figure 4: Selected participant Yes/No responses to the social institution survey questionnaire 2007



It is interesting to note that five participants (63%) reported that their children are enthusiastic about continuing their legacy. Conversely, the remainder (37%) highlighted that their children are not interested in taking up their legacy and consequently making contributions towards their social institution.

From Figure 4 an issue which troubled seven participants (88%) is the unavailability of sufficient street parking. In addition to this concern, there appears to be an increase in older age group volunteers and 50% of the participant responses indicate that young person volunteers are decreasing in number.

Table 3: Selected participant agree/disagree responses to the social institution survey questionnaire 2007

Selected questions asked of participants	participants agreeing	% of total agreeing	participants not agreeing	% of total not agreeing	total sample
Competition between social institutions is a concern in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide	8	100	nil	nil	8
Younger adults should be encouraged to become active members of social institutions	8	100	nil	nil	8
The social institution's following has increased over time	6	75	2	25	8
There is good interaction between the Greek social institution and non-Greek persons in the community	8	100	nil	nil	8

Table 3 shows that all participants in the social institution survey questionnaire responded that there is a need for younger adults to show their presence and be active members in social institutions. Also, all the participants agreed that competition between Greek social institutions in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide is a concern. In addition, from Table 3 it can be seen that 75% of respondents stated that Greek social institution followings in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide have increased with respect to time.

Table 4: *Selected participant responses extracted from the social institution survey questionnaire 2007*

	number of participant responses	% of total participants
participant's parents migrated from Greece	4	50
participant born in Greece	6	75
Greek migration has contributed to social development	8	100
total participants	8	

Table 4 shows that 50% of social institution participants responded that their parents were Greek immigrants and that 75% of those participants were born in Greece. Finally, it can be seen that all eight social institution participants stated that Greek immigration has influenced the social development of the inner western suburbs of Adelaide.

The five case studies which were derived from interviewing social organisation participants in the selected study area clearly identified that: a) social institutions exhibit Greek customs in the community, b) social institution participants are inspired and motivated to be associated with their organisation, and c) social institutions support philanthropic projects and community events.

Key actor responses to survey questionnaire

The sole key actor who participated in the key actor survey questionnaire responded that Greek immigrants have contributed towards the social and economic development of the inner western suburbs of Adelaide. Furthermore, this participant was confident that the Greek social and economic contribution in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide can be continued into the future.

In relation to the lack of street parking concerning business and social institution participants identified in this paper, the key actor was undecided. The participant indicated that in regard to this matter the main concern for council is achieving adequate traffic management and flow on the main roads. A suggestion made by the key

actor was that worried businesses and social institutions should consider providing parking facilities to cater for their customers' needs. A further notion put forward by the participant was for businesses to market their own strategy and promote their business as being a customer friendly environment in order to attract customers.

Finally, the key actor responded that it would depend solely on the type of service a business or social organisation is providing as to whether incentives for participants were warranted. In general the key actor felt a business or social institution must do more than provide a service to the community to be considered for incentives.

Conclusion

It must be stated that the recruitment of Greek businesses to participate in an interview was a difficult task to accomplish. Although this research study did not request any financial details or touch on sensitive issues, potential targeted business participants were very reluctant to take part in the research. It is of fundamental importance that in future research studies businesses should exhibit more involvement, because such university studies are conducted to benefit the community.

As seen from the analysis of the business survey questionnaire responses, the selected Greek businesses in the inner western suburbs of Adelaide can be sustained into the future. On the other hand social institutions are not in such a commanding position and require more involvement from younger generations in order to continue into the future. In general without an increasing fruitful involvement of younger generation persons, the selected Greek social institutions cannot be sustained into the future. It is also of vital importance for key actors to participate in such research studies also, because it is necessary for policy makers to understand and be aware of the community's conflicting issues in order to address them.

Recommendations for future research

Future research could firstly incorporate more business and social institutions in the inner western suburbs to obtain more concrete results, and secondly select a different sample area incorporating Greek business and social institution participants in, for example, the outer western suburbs of Adelaide. With such research foundations in place, paths will be available to conduct a comparative qualitative study to determine if economic and social contributions can be sustained.

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