

COMMUNITY  
ARTS SECTOR

# Perth business carries torch for Greece

Perth businesses have joined a global initiative investing in Greece's future through philanthropy and economic development.

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PERTH businesses have joined a global initiative co-founded by Darwin-born Dow Chemical Company boss Andrew Liveris to support and encourage Greek nationals amid their country's unprecedented economic crisis.

Called The Hellenic Initiative, the program aims to provide crisis relief to Greek citizens through fundraising efforts as well as initiate and support economic development through programs such as internships for young Greek nationals, who can then leverage the experience to find employment back home.

Perth businesses that have signed up to offer six-month internships for young Greek nationals include construction group Decmil, architecture firm Cox Howlett + Bailey Woodland, and chartered accounting firm RSM Bird Cameron.

The companies' involvement has been led by Decmil director Lee Verios, Cox Howlett & Bailey Woodland design director Steve Woodland, and RSM Bird Cameron managing director James Komninos, who have joined a coterie of Australian business people with Greek backgrounds keen to support their countrymen.

Mr Verios told *Business News* the move to bring the US-based

initiative to Australia was sparked by Mr Liveris's connection to Australia and the work of board members and lawyers Nick Mitros and Nicholas Pappas, from Western Australia and Sydney respectively.

More than a dozen partners pledged 20 internships at the Hellenic Initiative launch attended by 250 business people in Melbourne last month. By last week that number had risen to 43.

"The graduate program is designed to, in effect, stop the brain drain because of the high unemployment amongst the young people in Greece," Mr Verios said.

"They must go back to Greece; the whole idea is to ensure that they are far more employable back in Greece after having an international internship experience."

Mr Verios said the Perth companies that had pledged support

**“These are desperate times and the most important element of this initiative is that it's non-government, it's not political”** - Lee Verios

"A lot more companies will come on board," Mr Verios said.

"This Hellenic Initiative is a call to the wide diaspora of Greeks who have left Greece over the past 100 years or so. These are desperate times and the most important element of this initiative is that it's non-government, it's not political; it's direct assistance to Greek people."

"Many of us are second or third-generation Greeks who still have a strong love for the country."

He said Australian companies hiring Greek interns would not offer full-time employment afterwards.

for the initiative were already involved in many community-based activities and would draw on their networks and philanthropic experience to raise awareness and support for Greeks.

"Over the next six to 12 months ... we're planning a series of events and initiatives here in WA to raise the profile and understanding within the Greek Australian community but also within the broader community," he said.

"Having companies like Decmil, Cox Howlett and RSM is just the starting point."



**ASSIST:** Lee Verios is one of several Perth businessmen to have helped implement internships for young Greek nationals at local companies. **Photo:** Attila Csaszar

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## Creating new history

The Garnduwa Festival is an incredible community celebration in the Kimberley.

Six months out, people start coming together to talk, share stories and prepare to create new history as the Festival gears up towards the four day celebration in October.

About 5,000 people from remote areas come together to celebrate. The Garnduwa Festival includes music, language, art and sport and is underpinned by respect for Aboriginal culture.

But Garnduwa does more than organise the Festival. Throughout the year, they plan and run sport and recreation programs bringing communities together and keeping their culture alive.

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