

**I·A·I**

**Italian Australian Institute**

**In Search of the Italian Australian  
into the New Millennium**

**Conference Proceedings  
Melbourne - 24th, 25th, 26th of May 2000**

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**In Search of the Italian Australian  
into the New Millennium**

I.A.I.  
Italian Australian Institute

# In Search of the Italian Australian into the New Millennium

Conference Proceedings  
Melbourne - 24th, 25th, 26th of May 2000

Edited by  
Piero Genovesi and Walter Musolino

Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli,  
Margherita Genovesi





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# Table of Contents

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b>   | <i>page ix</i>    |
| <b>Index</b>   | <i>page xi</i>    |
| <b>Preface</b>   | <i>page xvii</i>  |
| <b>Final Recommendations of the Conference</b>                             | <i>page xxi</i>   |
| <b>Prime Ministerial Letter</b>  | <i>page xxiii</i> |
| <b>Ambassadorial Address</b>   | <i>page xxv</i>   |
| <b>Parliamentary Notes</b>   | <i>page xli</i>   |
| <b>Day One Session One</b>   | <i>page 1</i>     |
| <b>Lunch – Keynote Speaker</b>   | <i>page 653</i>   |
| <b>Day One Session Two</b>   |                   |
| Workshop 1    Australia Italia Trade and Commerce                          | <i>page 29</i>    |
| Workshop 2    Preservation of Italian Heritage and<br>Culture in Australia | <i>page 67</i>    |
| Workshop 3    Italian Australian Arts and Culture                          | <i>page 129</i>   |
| Workshop 4    Information Exchange and the Media                           | <i>page 191</i>   |

|  |                 |
|--|-----------------|
| <b>Day One Session Three</b>   |                 |
| Panel Discussion on Global Reality   | <i>page 757</i> |
| <b>Day Two Session One</b>   | <i>page 219</i> |
| <b>Lunch – Keynote Speaker</b>   | <i>page 663</i> |
| <b>Day Two Session Two</b>   |                 |
| Workshop 1    Language Policy and Youth Affairs  | <i>page 279</i> |
| Workshop 2    Cultural Diversity and Globalisation   | <i>page 319</i> |
| Workshop 3    Italian Australian Arts and Culture  | <i>page 407</i> |
| Workshop 4    Social Welfare, Health and Italian<br>Australian Enterprises                                       | <i>page 457</i> |
| <b>Day Two Session Three</b>   |                 |
| Panel Discussion on Exploring Identity and Community<br>Through the Arts and Culture                             | <i>page 797</i> |
| <b>Day Three Session One</b>   | <i>page 501</i> |
| <b>Lunch – Keynote Speaker</b>   | <i>page 669</i> |
| <b>Day Three Session Two</b>   |                 |
| Workshop 1    Cultural Identity and Community Life   | <i>page 543</i> |
| Workshop 2    Contribution of Religion and Education to<br>the Development of the Italian Australian<br>Identity | <i>page 591</i> |
| Workshop 3    Italian Australian Arts and Culture  | <i>page 627</i> |
| <b>Gala Dinner – Keynote Speakers</b>  | <i>page 675</i> |
| <b>Papers Received</b>   | <i>page 687</i> |
| <b>Bibliography</b>  | <i>page 841</i> |
| <b>Personal Biographies</b>  | <i>page 877</i> |
| <b>Press Cuttings and Photographs</b>  | <i>page 909</i> |



# Index

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| <b>Table of Contents</b>   | <i>page ix</i>    |
| <b>Index</b>   | <i>page xi</i>    |
| <b>Preface</b>   | <i>page xvii</i>  |
| <b>Final Recommendations of the Conference</b>                             | <i>page xxi</i>   |
| <b>Prime Ministerial Letter</b>  | <i>page xxiii</i> |
| <i>The Hon. John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia</i>                   |                   |
| <b>Ambassadorial Address</b>   | <i>page xxv</i>   |
| <i>Dr. Giovanni Castellaneta, Ambassador of Italy to Australia</i>         |                   |
| <b>Parliamentary Notes</b>   |                   |
| <i>The Hon. Phillip Barresi MP, Federal Member for Deakin, VIC</i>         | <i>page xli</i>   |
| <i>The Hon. Brian Pezzutti MLC, Member of the Legislative Council, NSW</i> | <i>page xliii</i> |
| <i>The Hon. Carmel Zollo MLC, Opposition Whip, SA</i>                      | <i>page xlv</i>   |

### **Day One Session One**

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| <i>Dr. Grande Ufficiale Rino Grollo, Chairperson of the Italian Australian Institute</i>       | page 1  |
| <i>H.E. Most Reverend Dr. George Pell, Archbishop of Melbourne</i>                             | page 3  |
| <i>The Hon. Sir James Gobbo, Governor of Victoria</i>  | page 5  |
| <i>H.E. Cardinal Francis George OMI, Archbishop of Chicago, USA</i>                            | page 9  |
| <i>The Hon. Phillip Ruddock MP, Minister for Immigration &amp; Multicultural Affairs</i>       | page 11 |
| <i>The Hon. Concetto Sciacca MP, Shadow Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs</i> | page 19 |
| <i>Mr Joseph Cerrell, President National Italian American Foundation (NIAF)</i>                | page 25 |

### **Day One Session Two**

#### **Workshop 1 Australia Italia Trade and Commerce**

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| <i>Mr. Bruno Mascitelli, Swinburne University, VIC</i>  | page 29 |
| <i>Mr. Sam Capuana, State Manager, Cassa Commerciale, VIC</i>                                     | page 43 |
| <i>Mr. A.A. De Fina OAM, President of the “Court of International Arbitration Australia”, VIC</i> | page 49 |
| <i>Ms. Carolynne Bourne, International Specialised Skills Institute, Melbourne, VIC</i>           | page 53 |

#### **Workshop 2 Preservation of Italian Heritage and Culture in Australia**

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <i>Professor John Gatt-Rutter, La Trobe University, VIC</i>                                   | page 67  |
| <i>Cav. Uff. Laura Mecca and Mr. Lorenzo Iozzi, Co.As.It. Italian Historical Society, VIC</i> | page 77  |
| <i>Dr. John Hall, University of New England, VIC</i>  | page 95  |
| <i>Ms. Madilina Tresca, All Saints Catholic College, NSW</i>                                  | page 103 |
| <i>Mr. Bruno Spiller, Marian College, VIC</i>   | page 115 |
| <i>Dr. Piero Genovesi, La Trobe University, VIC</i>   | page 123 |

#### **Workshop 3 Italian Australian Arts and Culture**

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <i>Ms. Maria Tence, Manager, Access Gallery, Immigration Museum, VIC</i> | page 129 |
| <i>Ms. Cristina Motta-Fenton, Box Hill TAFE, VIC</i>                     | page 147 |

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <i>Ms. Diana Chessell, University of South Australia</i> | page 161 |
| <i>Ms. Francesca Musico, University of Sydney, NSW</i>   | page 179 |
| <i>Ms. Marie Louise Catsalis, Self-Employed, NSW</i>     | page 187 |

#### Workshop 4 Information Exchange and the Media

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <i>Cav. Uff. Nino Randazzo, Director "Il Globo", VIC</i>                       | page 191 |
| <i>Ms. Manuela Caluzzi, Head of Italian Program, SBS Radio, Melbourne, VIC</i> | page 199 |
| <i>Ms. Paola Niscioli, Member of Com.It.Es., SA, and of "AustraliaDonna"</i>   | page 205 |
| <i>Dott. Claudio Paroli, "TVi Productions P/L", NSW</i>                        | page 209 |

#### Day Two Session One

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <i>Professor Michael Osborne, Vice Chancellor, La Trobe University, VIC</i>                              | page 219 |
| <i>Emeritus Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, AO, CBE, Aust. Nat. University, ACT</i>                           | page 227 |
| <i>Elio Guarnuccio, Publisher and Former Chairman of Centro Italiano Studi (CIS), VIC</i>                | page 237 |
| <i>Professor Flavio Lucchesi, Department of Human Geography, Università degli Studi di Milano, ITALY</i> | page 243 |
| <i>Dr. James Jupp, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT</i>                                     | page 261 |
| <i>Professor Roslyn Pesman, Pro-Vice Chancellor, University of Sydney, NSW</i>                           | page 269 |

#### Day Two Session Two

##### Workshop 1 Language Policy and Youth Affairs

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| <i>Department of Education, Employment and Training, VIC</i>                                 | page 279 |
| <i>Mr. Joseph Favrin, Penola Catholic College, VIC</i>                                       | page 289 |
| <i>Ms. Maryclare Cassisi, Member of Com.It.Es. Melbourne, President "Club Cultura", VIC.</i> | page 295 |
| <i>Mr. Peter Iagnocco, Xavier College, VIC</i>   | page 299 |
| <i>Ms. Elida Meadows, Waverley Library, NSW</i>  | page 309 |

## Workshop 2 Cultural Diversity and Globalisation

- Dr. Krzysztof Batorowicz, University of Southern Queensland* page 319  
*Adjunct Professor V. Giorgio Venturini, Swinburne University of Technology, VIC* page 333  
*Dr. Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, Director of the Italian Australian Records Project, Victoria University of Technology, VIC* page 355  
*Ms. Laura Hougaz, Swinburne University of Technology, VIC* page 365  
*Professor Anne Reynolds, University of Sydney, NSW* page 377  
*Dr. Adriano Boncompagni, University of Western Australia* page 391

## Workshop 3 Italian Australian Arts and Culture

- Ms. Stephanie Lindsay Thompson, Australian National University, ACT* page 407  
*Mr. Pino Migliorino, President of Co.As.It., NSW* page 419  
*Dr. Nerina Caltabiano and Dr. Stephen Torre, James Cook University, QLD* page 429  
*Dr. Paolo Bartoloni, University of Sydney, NSW* page 439  
*Dr. Ilaria Vanni, University of Western Sydney, NSW* page 449

## Workshop 4 Social Welfare, Health and Italian Australian Enterprises

- Ms. Lara Damiani, "Lara Damiani & Associates", SA* page 457  
*Ms. Maria Vandamme, "Melba Recordings", VIC* page 463  
*Dr. Walter Petralia and Dr. Yvonne Wells, Lincoln Gerontology Centre, VIC* page 475  
*Ms. Emma Contessa, Manager of Aged Care Services, Co.As.It., Melbourne, VIC* page 489  
*Mr. Dino De Marchi, "De Marchi & Associates", VIC* page 493

## Day Three Session One

- H.E. Most Reverend Dr. George Pell, Archbishop of Melbourne* page 501  
*Professor Desmond Cahill, RMIT University, VIC* page 507  
*Mr. Desmond O'Grady, Author, Journalist, Rome, ITALY* page 521  
*Professor Mary Kalantzis, RMIT University, VIC* page 525  
*Prof. Cav. Uff. Giovanni Carsaniga, University of Sydney, NSW* page 535

### **Day Three Session Two**

#### **Workshop 1 Cultural Identity and Community Life**

*Dr. Maria Pallotta Chiarolli, (Deakin University, VIC)  
and Vittorio Perri, Vicky Guglielmo and Luciano* page 543

*Ms. Susanna Iuliano, Dept of Immigration and Multicultural  
Affairs, ACT* page 559

*Ms. Lara Palombo, University of Adelaide, SA* page 575

#### **Workshop 2 Contribution of Religion and Education to the Development of the Italian Australian Identity**

*Ms. Anna Maria Barbaro, High School Teacher, Brisbane, QLD* page 591

*Mr. Anthony Cappello, National Civic Council, VIC* page 599

*Reverend Massimo Vodola, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour  
Church, VIC* page 609

*Dr. John Hajek, University of Melbourne, VIC* page 611

#### **Workshop 3 Italian Australian Arts and Culture**

*Reverend Franco Cavarra, St Mary of the Angels Church, VIC* page 627

*Mr. Vince Marotta, Deakin University, VIC* page 635

*The Hon. Carlo Carli MP, Parliamentary Secretary for  
Infrastructure, VIC* page 649

### **Lunches and Dinners**

*Mr. Mark Leibler, Senior Partner, "Arnold, Bloch, Leibler", VIC* page 653

*Mr. John Salamone, Special Projects Director, NIAF, USA* page 661

*His Honour Justice Stephen Charles, Supreme Court Judge,  
Melbourne, VIC* page 663

*The Right Hon. Frank Sartor, Lord Mayor of Sydney, NSW* page 669

*Cr. Clem Newton-Brown, Deputy Lord Mayor of  
Melbourne, VIC* page 674

*The Hon. Steve Bracks MP, Premier of Victoria* page 675

*H.E. Cardinal Francis George OMI, Archbishop of Chicago, USA* page 679

*The Hon. Helen Shardey MP, Shadow Minister for Multicultural  
Affairs, VIC* page 683

## **Papers Received**

- Comm. Diana Ruzzene Grollo, Director of the Italian Australian Institute and Author, VIC* page 687
- Dr. Joseph Talia, Managing Director, Melbourne City Opera, VIC* page 701
- Ms. Nora Ruzzene, Coordinator, Multicultural Social Welfare Team, VIC* page 719
- Dott. Danilo Longhi, President, Camera di Commercio di Vicenza, ITALY* page 731

## **Panel Discussion on Global Reality** page 757

- Mr. John Goddard, Bendigo Bank, Sydney, NSW*
- Dott. Gianni Bardini, Consul General of Italy for Victoria and Tasmania*
- Mr. Nat Bonacci, Bonacci Group, VIC*
- Mr. Santo Cilauro, Writer and Producer, Melbourne, VIC*
- Mr. Antonino Iaccarino, Qantas Airways, NSW*
- Mr. Lucio Mafessanti, Permasteelisa SPA, Treviso, ITALY*
- Dr. Rocco Perna, Ferrero Australia (Pty Ltd), Sydney, NSW*

## **Panel Discussion on Exploring Identity and Community Through the Arts and Culture** page 797

- Ms. Josephine Cafagna, 7:30 Report, ABC, Melbourne, VIC*
- Ms. Teresa Crea, Artistic Director, Adelaide, SA*
- Ms. Anna Maria Dell'oso, Author, Sydney, NSW*
- Ms. Melina Marchetta, Author, Sydney, NSW*
- Dr. Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, Lecturer and Author, Deakin University, VIC*
- Ms. Virginia Trioli, Journalist and Author, Sydney, NSW*

## **Bibliography** page 841

## **Personal Biographies** page 877

## **Press Cuttings and Photographs** page 909

# Preface

The opening of the new millennium seemed an appropriate occasion for the Italian Australian Institute to launch its inaugural national conference. It ran from 24th to 26th May and was entitled “In Search of the Italian Australian into the New Millennium.” It assembled an international array of speakers, as well as numerous local contributors. The Institute had come into being eighteen months earlier with the aim of providing Australians of Italian origin with a central focus through which to channel their growing political, social, educational and artistic aspirations.

In this spirit the Institute seeks to be a truly national and representative body, just as it seeks to be collaborative in its approach, liaising with existing, like-minded organizations.

In the year 2000 the Institute intended the inaugural Conference to be both the platform for its official public launch and also the occasion for fostering an open discussion of its objectives. The aim was to make those objectives as inclusive as possible, broadly representative of our community’s disparate perspectives and needs. Accordingly, the conference took the shape of major speeches, workshops and panels, a format which invited active public participation. It was very gratifying to see all sessions well attended and the event raising great excitement and debate. This confirmed our view that there has long been a need for such an open forum of ideas and interaction to be made available to the Italian community in Australia.

The Conference was envisaged as a purposely designed opportunity to bring this community together, to discuss collectively the Institute’s future directions, and to prioritise the innumerable recommendations we knew would be put forward once this new entity took its place in the public spotlight. Its most basic commitment, clearly stated, is to work

together for the benefit of the Italians of this country. The Institute gives this undertaking while fully recognizing and completely respecting everything good that has been achieved thus far by other Italian-Australians, singly and institutionally. This will be reflected in the Institute's genuine aspiration to work in a spirit of partnership and sharing with those already experienced in addressing the needs of the Italian Australian community.

It was perhaps inevitable, but the ground-breaking Conference held this year at the Park Hyatt in Melbourne addressed a broad spectrum of issues, stretching even to the weighty matter of trade and commerce between Italy and Australia, and related global realities. It addressed the preservation of Italian heritage in our country as well as the richly idiosyncratic manifestations of Italian Australian arts and culture to which we have been witness for a while now. There were thornier matters aired, like language policy and education, women's and youth affairs, media and sexuality, social welfare and health, not to mention the struggle for Italian Australian enterprises to survive and succeed in an essentially English cultural context. Flowing from this, such a Conference was always going to have to tackle other, profound questions, as it did, like the nature of identity and what it means to be part of a sometimes marginalised community; and like the function of the Catholic Church - and religious faith generally - which has been so central to the lives of many migrants. Of course, politics, especially the presence and numbers of Australians of Italian origin at all levels of government, their ability to contribute as ethnic role models not just as party players and the needs of the future in this sense was an ever-bubbling debate at the Conference.

Among the many notable contributors, the Institute was very pleased to host such guest speakers as Cardinal Archbishop George from Chicago and Archbishop Pell of Melbourne, as well as Archbishop Francesco Canalini, the Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to Australia, the Italian Ambassador, Dott. Castellaneta, and the Victorian Governor, Sir James Gobbo. Political figures from both major Australian parties were present: the Honourable Philip Ruddock, Minister for Immigration & Multicultural Affairs and his Labor counterpart, the Honourable Con Sciacca, together with the Premier of Victoria, Mr Steve Bracks, and other federal, state and local government figures. The Institute was particularly gratified to be able to present to the Australian audience Mr Joseph Cerrell, President of the National Italian American Foundation (Washington), the organization from which we have drawn much inspiration. The Institute extends its thanks to all the conference



participants, among whom were respected academics such as Professor Michael Osborne, Vice Chancellor of La Trobe University, Professor Mary Kalantzis, Dean of the Faculty of Education, Language & Community Studies at RMIT University, Professor Roslyn Pesman, Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University of Sydney, and Professor Bill Kent of Monash University, in addition to a plethora of speakers from the educational sector and personalities from the world of the media and the arts, business and the broader community.

The Italian Australian Institute would especially like to express its appreciation for the heart-warming contributions of the Conference sponsors: ANZ Banking Group, “bella italia”, the Bonacci Group, the Cassa Commerciale, Conexport, Fondazione Cassamarca - Treviso, Italy, Gro-Set Pty Ltd, Grollo Australia Pty Ltd, Il Globo, James Williams Pty Ltd, the Park Hyatt Hotel, Permasteelisa - Treviso, Italy, the Pratt Foundation, Qantas and the Government of Italy.

A significant number of Australia’s most prestigious universities also lent their support to the Conference and ought duly to be recognised for their vision in doing so: the Australian National University, Deakin University, La Trobe University, Monash University, RMIT University, Swinburne University of Technology, the University of Melbourne, the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Sydney, the University of Western Australia and Victoria University of Technology.

At the conclusion of the Conference a series of recommendations was presented to the public. They were the culmination of all the discussions and deliberations held over the entire three days, incorporating both long and short-term objectives. More urgently though, in the area of intergovernmental relationships between Italy and Australia, the Institute is lending its support to a host of initiatives already under way, or initiatives that should be undertaken. It supports, for example, the finalisation of an agreement on working arrangements to assist young people in developing networks in both Italy and Australia. Such agreements already exist between Australia and other nations and they allow some 60,000 young working visitors into our country per annum.

The Institute adds its voice to those calling for formal recognition by both the Italian and Australian governments of ‘multi’ citizenship for Australians of Italian background wishing to hold dual passports. It also recommends that an agreement be negotiated to facilitate the exchange of education policy advisers at the highest level, to develop an appropriate curriculum in both Australia and Italy for bolstering migration studies.

With an eye to nurturing the grass roots, the Institute also calls for the provision of significant numbers of scholarships for young people in the whole range of the arts, including performing arts, expressive arts, the humanities and social sciences. (And here we welcome the offer of support for young Italian-Australians from the National American Italian Foundation.)

The Institute would also see a need for compiling and publishing a calendar of Italian/Australian cultural and commercial events and agreements, accessible to all those in need of such information. Where commerce is concerned, the Institute could play a part as a bridge between peak business bodies in both Italy and Australia, helping to sharpen the competitive edge of both economies.

The Institute believes the time is ripe for the creation of a 'think-tank' devoted to assessing the current state of the Italian-Australian media, in order to help strengthen and improve its function and purpose by addressing the needs of second and third generation Italian Australians.

The Institute intends adding its efforts to those of other organizations to assist the older-generation Italians, our migrant pioneers. It wishes to see a broadening of health education programs in Italian and regional languages, wherever necessary. At the Conference, the afternoon workshops confronted and argued over topics as varied as Italy's globalization and 'campanilismo' in Australia; being gay as a 'handicap' on top of being Italian, and then again, what it is like being an Italophile; migrant women as mainstays of the past but even more as capital for the future; and the question, 'does Italian have a future at all in Australia?'

Thank you to all involved.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Grollo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rino Grollo  
Chairman

# Final Recommendations of the Conference

The Italian Australian Institute will establish a national structure aimed at advancing the interests of Italian-Australian wherever they may live and work across the continent, and will collaborate with existing organisations.

Participants in the inaugural conference of the Italian Australian Institute, meeting in Melbourne on 24, 25, 26 May 2000 voted unanimously for the following recommendations:

- support for dual citizenship
- working holiday visas for young people in both countries
- increased government funding for Italian language and other programs in Australian universities
- greater focus on issues concerning young people and women
- regular briefings for the Australian media on Italian-Australian matters
- establishment of a media monitoring service to review how Italian-Australians are depicted in the Australian media
- the creation of a national research centre dedicated to the history and culture of Italian-Australians
- better cultural links between Italy and Australia, including the provision of scholarships for young people
- the documentation of Italian-Australian culture in all its forms
- working with the Italian-Australian media to promote a more informed dialogue between the generations in the Italian-Australian community
- the identification of mutual competitive advantage. As economies, Italy and Australia have much more to offer each other, one as the gateway to a unified Europe, and the other as a route into the Asia-Pacific region. The Institute could play a role in working with peak business bodies in both countries to help them understand the symmetry in this economic relationship, as well as the opportunities open to business operators.



Gaspare Sirianni  
Executive Director

26th May 2000



PRIME MINISTER  
CANBERRA

**MESSAGE: ITALIAN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE  
INAUGURAL CONFERENCE, 24-26 MAY 2000**

It gives me great pleasure to send greetings to the Italian Australian Institute, the organising committee, sponsors, speakers, honoured guests and delegates attending this inaugural conference in Melbourne from 24-26 May, 2000. I regret that because of other commitments I cannot attend the conference.

For this first conference The Italian Australian Institute has chosen the theme "In Search of the Italian Australian: Into the New Millennium". The theme highlights the forward-looking nature of the Institute itself and will further the Institute's aims of promoting Italian heritage and culture as an integral part of Australia's national identity. Delegates will have an opportunity to consider a wide range of issues including trade, heritage, information exchange and the media, and arts and culture.

Since the Australian Federation was created in 1901, the Italian-Australian community has greatly increased its presence in Australia and the two countries have enjoyed a strong positive relationship. The need to support a growing Italian Australian community has led to the establishment of organisations such as the Italian Australian Institute. The Institute through its many activities has the capacity to contribute greatly to the preservation of important Italian traditions and to increase understanding and tolerance of cultural diversity in the broader Australian community.

I congratulate the Italian Australian Institute on its initiative and wish them success at this inaugural conference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Howard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the name "Howard".

(John Howard)

## The Rediscovery of Italianness.

*H.E. Dr. Giovanni Castellaneta, Ambassador of Italy*

*I am honoured to be present at the inaugural conference of the IAI. The Conference's very title, "In Search of the Italian Australian into the New Millenium", stands as a clear invitation to look to the future of the Italo-Australian community and, so to the special relationship that binds Italy and Australia.*

### *The Rediscovery of Italianness*

*Over the last few years we have seen our expatriate communities all over the world involved in the process of rediscovering what it is to be Italian.*

*We see it happening daily in Canberra and in Buenos Aires, in New York as well as São Paolo, Brazil. The number of requests for the reacquisition of Italian citizenship have been increasing. And above all what has been striking is how in particular young people are applying for Italian passports. Some do it for economic reasons, others for reasons of sentiment, but all of them do it because they want to re-establish ties with the birthplace of their ancestors. They want to learn more about the culture and language of their country of origin.*

*Even in the earliest destinations for migrating Italians, like the United States and Argentina, the descendants of those migrants are beginning to take an interest in their roots. The third and fourth generations have started wondering about their origins, wondering about those surnames replete with vowels, which frequently are the unmistakable sign of belonging to this or that group.*

*Several factors explain this resurgence of interest. The first is the modern flow of information and the enhanced facility of communication with Italy. It is not a cliché to repeat that today the world is a small place and that, thanks to communication technology, the planet is being transformed into a global village.*

*One hundred years ago, immigrants could hope at most to receive a rare letter from a loved one back home. They depended on these letters just to garner some news of what was happening in Italy. Today, you can hear the latest from Italy wherever you are in the world, and keeping in touch with relatives and loved ones is easier than it has ever been.*

## La Riscoperta dell'Italianità

*S.E. Dott. Giovanni Castellaneta, Ambasciatore d'Italia*

Sono onorato di partecipare alla conferenza inaugurale dell'IAI. Il titolo stesso della conferenza, "In search of the Italian Australian into the New Millenium", è un chiaro invito a guardare al futuro della comunità italo australiana e quindi anche dei legami speciali che uniscono Italia e Australia.

### La Riscoperta dell'Italianità

Negli ultimi anni abbiamo assistito ad una vera e propria riscoperta dell'Italianità da parte di tutte le componenti della nostra comunità all'estero.

Lo vediamo quotidianamente, a Canberra come a Buenos Aires, a New York come a San Paolo del Brasile. Sempre più numerose sono le richieste di riacquisto di cittadinanza. Ed è soprattutto impressionante constatare come siano specialmente i giovani a chiederci di riavere il passaporto italiano. Alcuni lo fanno per ragioni economiche. Altri, per ragioni sentimentali. Tutti, perché vogliono ristabilire un legame con la patria dei loro antenati. Vogliono sapere di più sulla lingua e la cultura del loro paese di origine.

Persino nei paesi di più antica emigrazione, come gli Stati Uniti e l'Argentina, i discendenti dei primi emigrati hanno ripreso ad interessarsi alle loro radici. Le terze e quarte generazioni hanno cominciato ad interrogarsi sulle proprie origini, su quei cognomi con tante vocali che spesso costituiscono un marchio inequivocabile di appartenenza. Diversi fattori spiegano questa rinascita di interesse.

Il primo è la circolazione delle informazioni e la maggiore facilità di comunicare con l'Italia.

Non è una battuta dire che ormai il mondo si è ristretto e che la terra, grazie ai mezzi di comunicazione, si sta sempre più trasformando in un "villaggio globale."

Cento anni fa, chi emigrava aveva al massimo la speranza di ricevere qualche rara lettera da amici e parenti lasciati in patria. Ai racconti di questi si doveva affidare anche per avere un riflesso di cosa succedesse in Italia. Oggi, in qualsiasi angolo del mondo si possono avere notizie fresche dall'Italia. E con facilità ancora maggiore si possono mantenere i contatti con i parenti e gli affetti.

*The second factor is what I would call the 'rediscovery of Italy'. Mass tourism and ease of travel have made us all potential Marco Polo's.*

*There are no longer huge sacrifices to be made or great costs to be met for anyone simply wishing to travel. This has allowed many people of Italian descent to rediscover their country of origin as well as a sense of pride for an artistic and cultural heritage that is unequalled. It has also allowed a large number of people to visit Italy, to experience it for themselves, as it really is, and be fascinated by it. Few of those stereotypes that our fellow countrymen and women have understandably often fought to repudiate - even to the extent of hiding the fact that they were Italian - are left intact in the face of our country's dazzling show of historical, cultural and spiritual greatness.*

*The third factor responsible for the 'rediscovery of Italianness', is what I would call the dual success story of Italy and Italians abroad. Rising out of the ruins of the Second World War, Italy became one of the big players on the stage of the world economy. Its image, its creativity and increasingly its capacity to lead, have won over the world. At the same time, Italians living abroad became valuable members of society and, prepared to make enormous sacrifice, gained positions of importance. Generation after generation adapted, became integrated and finally achieved the successes it was due in the countries which have welcomed them in.*

*Allowing for a few rather obvious exaggerations, I think the film "Looking for Alibrandi" illustrates this process quite well. It is a film set in Australia but it could be describing the vicissitudes of an Italian family anywhere in the world. It describes their initial difficulties, as well as the little humiliations, their gradual assimilation and finally their complete integration very well. In short, it is a realistic depiction of the gradual transformation of an Italian family surrounded by the different culture and language of another country. It is an inevitable transformation that does not, however, obliterate underlying family traits. Without knowing it, perhaps without even suspecting it, even young Josie Alibrandi, carries her unmistakable Italianness within herself like personal baggage; it is a 'cultural code', an ancient heritage, an inner richness no one can steal from her. One day she, or perhaps even her daughter, will rediscover it; and she will feel the pride of belonging to a culture millennially-old, one that expresses some of the finest achievements of human civilization.*

*The history of Italy and the history of the Italians are inextricably woven together. History on a grand scale is no more than the sum of millions of personal stories. Italy has flourished over these last decades.*

Il secondo fattore è quello che definirei la “riscoperta dell’Italia”. Il turismo di massa e la facilità degli spostamenti hanno fatto di tutti noi dei potenziali Marco Polo. Non sono più necessari gli immensi sacrifici o gli altissimi costi di un tempo per chi voglia viaggiare. Questo ha permesso in primo luogo a molti discendenti di italiani di riscoprire il proprio Paese di origine e di sentire tutto l’orgoglio di un patrimonio artistico e culturale ineguagliabile. In secondo luogo, ha permesso ad un gran numero di persone di visitare l’Italia, di conoscerla per quello che è, di restarne affascinati. Pochi stereotipi – quegli stereotipi da cui alcuni nostri connazionali, comprensibilmente, hanno cercato di difendersi, anche a costo di “nascondere” le proprie origini italiane – possono resistere alla abbagliante dimostrazione della grandezza storica, culturale, spirituale del nostro paese.

Il terzo fattore alla base della “riscoperta della italianità è quello che definirei la “doppia success story” dell’Italia e degli Italiani all’estero. L’Italia è risorta dalle macerie della Seconda Guerra Mondiale diventando uno dei Paesi di punta della economia mondiale. La sua immagine, la sua creatività, e sempre più anche che la sua capacità di leadership hanno conquistato il mondo. Parallelamente, anche gli Italiani all’estero hanno saputo farsi valere, hanno conquistato spesso con grandi sacrifici dei posti di rilievo. Generazione dopo generazione si sono prima adattati, poi integrati ed infine sempre più affermati nei Paesi che li hanno accolti.

Al di là di qualche spunto di colore un po’ “calcato”, trovo che il film *Looking for Alibrandi* costituisca una buona descrizione di questo processo. E’ un film australiano ma che potrebbe descrivere le vicissitudini di una famiglia italiana in qualsiasi parte del mondo. Ne descrive bene le difficoltà iniziali, persino le piccole umiliazioni, la graduale assimilazione, fino alla completa integrazione. Insomma, un quadro realistico che racconta la graduale trasformazione di un nucleo familiare italiano in un paese di lingua e cultura diversa. Una trasformazione inevitabile che però non cancella alcuni elementi di fondo. Anche la giovane Alibrandi, senza saperlo, forse senza nemmeno sospettarlo, porta con sé un bagaglio di italianità indelebile: un “codice culturale”, un patrimonio antico, una ricchezza interiore di cui nessuno potrà privarla. Un giorno, lei o forse persino sua figlia, lo riscoprirà. E sentirà l’orgoglio di appartenere ad una cultura millenaria, che ha espresso alcune fra le vette più elevate della civiltà mondiale.

Le storie dell’Italia e le storie degli Italiani procedono di pari passo. La “grande storia” in fin dei conti non è che la somma di milioni di storie individuali. In questi decenni, l’Italia è cresciuta. E così hanno fatto gli



*So too have Italians both at home and abroad. Their lives keep converging, intersecting and becoming a source of mutual strength.*

### *The Rediscovery Of The Italians*

*This reawakened desire for Italianness is advantageous for re-establishing relations between Italy and the world community. If Italians have rediscovered Italy, Italy has rediscovered Italians abroad. Let us be clear: Italy has never forgotten its sons and daughters scattered throughout the world. Nevertheless, in order to keep up with their ever-growing needs, expectations and feelings, Italy has had to alter profoundly its philosophical position over the last few years and to the extent that I would call it well and truly a revolution in attitude of Copernican magnitude.*

*In the past, our migrants, who had often left for economic reasons, were in need above all of 'assistance'. The infrastructure set in place by Italian governments was, therefore, of a social welfare nature.*

*Thank heaven, Italian communities abroad no longer need this sort of assistance. Clearly, it has come of age and is able to stand on its own two feet. Barring some exceptions, it does not need protecting or paternalistic attitudes.*

*As things stand today, what Italian communities abroad need is 'recognition': recognition in that they exist, and for being Italian too; recognition for their contribution to their country of origin and to their host countries; recognition of their worth and their values; and, finally, recognition for being overall an invaluable inheritance for Italy. This is where what I previously called Italy's "revolution in attitude of Copernican magnitude" has taken place: in its relationship with Italian communities abroad.*

*1999 was perhaps the key date in all this. I am referring in particular to the long-awaited approval of the constitutional reform that now opens the way for Italian citizens residing abroad to gain the right to vote at Italian elections. Thanks to this reform, all Italians who reside permanently outside Italy will be able to have their say. It is in this spirit that the first Conference of Italians in the World is to be organized next December, in Rome. The Conference will be accompanied by a series of artistic and cultural exhibitions which will be further testament to the values of these expatriate communities: a testament to their desire and their right to count for something.*

Italiani in patria ed all'estero. Le loro vicende si incontrano, si intrecciano inestricabilmente, si rafforzano a vicenda.

### La Riscoperta degli Italiani

Questa "italianità di ritorno" favorisce un rilancio dei rapporti fra l'Italia e la comunità nel mondo.

Se gli italiani hanno riscoperto l'Italia, quest'ultima ha riscoperto gli italiani all'estero.

Intendiamoci, l'Italia non ha mai dimenticato i suoi figli sparsi per il mondo. Tuttavia, negli ultimi anni, per restare al passo con l'evoluzione delle loro esigenze, delle loro aspettative e dei loro sentimenti, l'Italia ha dovuto mutare profondamente la propria "filosofia", con quella che definirei una vera e propria "rivoluzione copernicana".

In passato, la nostra emigrazione, spesso spinta da motivazioni economiche, aveva soprattutto bisogno di assistenza. Le strutture predisposte dall'Italia per sostenerla rispondevano quindi necessariamente ad una visione di tipo "assistenziale".

La comunità italiana all'estero, grazie al cielo, non ha più bisogno di essere "assistita". Ormai è ampiamente maggiorenne e cammina benissimo sulle proprie gambe. Non ha bisogno, se non in casi eccezionali, né di tutele né di atteggiamenti paternalistici.

Quello di cui ha bisogno la nostra comunità oggi come oggi è soprattutto il riconoscimento. Riconoscimento della propria esistenza e della propria italianità; riconoscimento del contributo che ha saputo dare al Paese d'origine ed ai Paesi che l'hanno ospitata; riconoscimento del proprio valore e dei propri valori; riconoscimento, infine, del patrimonio inestimabile che essa rappresenta per l'Italia nel suo complesso.

È in questo contesto che si colloca quella che ho prima definito la "rivoluzione copernicana" dell'Italia nei confronti della comunità all'estero.

Il 1999 ne è stato forse la data chiave. Mi riferisco in particolare alla tanto attesa approvazione della modifica costituzionale che apre la strada al diritto di voto ai cittadini italiani residenti all'estero. Grazie ad essa, tutti gli italiani che si trovano fuori dai confini nazionali avranno una voce.

Nello stesso spirito verrà organizzata a Roma, il prossimo dicembre, la prima *Conferenza degli Italiani nel mondo*. La Conferenza sarà accompagnata da una serie di manifestazioni artistiche e culturali. Un ulteriore riconoscimento dei valori della Comunità all'estero. Del suo desiderio e diritto di "contare".

### The Italian Community in Australia.

*The processes I have outlined above also apply, and perhaps more so, to the situation of particular interest to us: that of Italians in Australia. I say all the more so because of all the Italian communities throughout the world, the one in Australia, at least where the bulk of migrants is concerned, is the result of a very 'recent' immigration phenomenon. In North and South America it is the fourth and fifth generations that are rediscovering Italy. In Australia it is the third generation that is venturing out onto the world stage.*

*If we count the descendants of the first immigrants and children of mixed marriages, Italian blood runs through at least 2 million Australian citizens: ten percent of the overall population. Australians of Italian origin are present in the Arts, in the Sciences, in the professions, in business, in sport and in politics. In all of these areas they have contributed greatly to public life. The contributions made by prominent personalities has been particularly visible. But no less far-reaching, and perhaps even more fundamental, has been the role of the average person.*

*Italo-Australians have influenced the Australian way of life enormously.*

*They have made it what it is today: a busy point of intersection for Anglo-Saxon customs, with a sense of Mediterranean style, frontier spirit and a desire for innovation. Through their work ethic they have contributed to the growth of this nation. Indeed, they have been at least partly responsible for laying the foundations.*

*On the basis of this we see how a special relationship between Australia and Italy is justified. I shall not dwell here on the positive nature of political relations between the two countries. I would only like to remind you of the experience of East Timor. As you all know, Italy contributed a contingent of 600 men to the INTERFET force; there were 200 parachutists, 2 transport planes and an amphibious vessel. The collaboration between Italian and Australian forces on the ground was exemplary and more than once the Australian command acknowledged the importance of the Italian contribution.*

*If we decided to take part in a drama so far removed from our strategic priorities, it is also due to the particular type of relationship that we believe we need to build with Australia by virtue of the fact that there are many citizens of Italian origin in this country.*

## La Comunità Italiana d’Australia

I processi che ho delineato sopra valgono anche, e forse a maggior ragione, per la realtà che ci interessa più da vicino, quella degli italiani d’Australia.

Dico a maggior ragione anche perché fra le comunità italiane nel mondo, quella australiana è, almeno nella sua parte numericamente più consistente, una immigrazione “giovane”. Nelle Americhe sono ormai le quarte e quinte generazioni quelle che “riscoprono” l’Italia. In Australia è la terza generazione quella che si affaccia sul palcoscenico del mondo.

Se contiamo i discendenti dei primi immigrati ed i figli di matrimoni misti, il “sangue italiano” scorre nelle vene di almeno 2 milioni di cittadini australiani: il dieci per cento della popolazione globale.

Gli australiani di origine italiana sono presenti nel campo delle arti, delle scienze, delle professioni, degli affari, dello sport e della politica. In ognuna di queste aree essi hanno dato un grande contributo alla vita pubblica.

Particolarmente “visibile” è stato l’apporto di alcune personalità di spicco. Ma non inferiore, ed anzi forse persino più capillare è stato quello delle persone comuni.

Con la loro presenza, gli italo-australiani hanno influito enormemente sullo stile di vita australiano. Ne hanno fatto quello che è oggi: un vitale incrocio fra costumi anglosassoni, stile mediterraneo, spirito di frontiera e volontà di innovazione.

Con il loro lavoro, hanno contribuito alla crescita di questa nazione. Anzi, ne hanno forgiato almeno in parte le fondamenta.

Su queste basi ci sono le premesse per un rapporto privilegiato fra Australia ed Italia. Non starò a dilungarmi qui sul carattere positivo delle relazioni politiche fra i due paesi. Vorrei solo ricordare qui la vicenda di Timor Est. Come voi tutti sapete, l’Italia ha contribuito alla forza internazionale INTERFET con un contingente di 600 uomini, tra cui 200 paracadutisti, due aerei da trasporto e una nave anfibia. La collaborazione sul terreno fra forze australiane ed italiane è stata esemplare e più volte il comando australiano ha riconosciuto l’importanza del contributo italiano.

Se abbiamo deciso di intervenire in un teatro così lontano da quello entro il quale si collocano le nostre priorità strategiche, ciò lo si deve anche al rapporto particolare che riteniamo di dover costruire con l’Australia in virtù della presenza in questo paese di tanti cittadini di origine italiana.

*I believe this sense of a friendship between us is reciprocal. With this in mind, I would like to underline how the Australian Government has been quick to support the right of Italians resident here, including voters holding dual citizenship, to vote in Italian elections. This is further proof of the excellent relationship between the two countries.*

### Prospects

*So is everything fine? Is everything perfect? We live in the best of possible worlds, but can we derive comfort from the success of the Australian community and the good state of relations between our two countries?*

*Not really, or rather, not enough.*

*The Italian community should not simply be satisfied with the success it has achieved. Without doubt, we can look back and feel great satisfaction, but the time has come to look to the future and find a way to strengthen the active participation of Italians in the life of this country. Thinking also of the significance of the celebrations to come for the centenary of Australian Federation and, therefore, having in mind the contribution that each ethnic group has made to the development of this country, I believe that the Italian authorities and the local community need to implement a three-stage plan involving (i) knowing who we are, (ii) letting others know who we are, and (iii) acting accordingly.*

*Firstly, let us consider 'knowing who we are'.*

*We need to quantify our numbers, to carry out further research to trace more thoroughly the history and the geography of the Italian community in Australia. We need to take account of mixed marriages and changes to surnames and of the lineage of the first immigrants. We must not forget that the first Italians arrived here in 1850, approximately 150 years ago when maps of Australia were still imprecise and well before the idea of national independence had ever taken hold. We have to embrace a more complete notion of Italianness, one that goes beyond mere nationality and underscores the importance of blood and cultural ties. It is not a passport that identifies an Italian but how we feel inside.*

*Secondly, we come to 'letting others know who we are'.*

*In this area we can and we must do a lot more. The word 'Italy' is not only synonymous with fashion and cuisine, it denotes culture. On its own Italy holds more than fifty percent of the world's artistic heritage. 'Italy' stands for industrial production, scientific endeavour, great intellectual activity, and sport: everything that constitutes a modern, vital nation with a glorious past though Italy does not live in that past but rather learns from it in order to build a better future.*

Ritengo che questo sentimento di amicizia sia ricambiato. A tal proposito vorrei sottolineare come il governo australiano abbia subito concesso l'autorizzazione all'esercizio di voto all'estero da parte degli italiani qui residenti, anche agli elettori in possesso di doppia cittadinanza – ulteriore prova dell'ottimo stato dei rapporti fra i due paesi.

### Le Prospettive

Allora, tutto bene, tutto perfetto? Viviamo nel migliore dei mondi possibili e possiamo cullarci dei successi della comunità italiana e del buono stato delle relazioni fra i nostri due paesi?

Non proprio. O meglio: non abbastanza.

La comunità italiana non deve solo compiacersi dei successi di quello che ha fatto. Possiamo senz'altro guardare indietro con estrema soddisfazione, ma si tratta ora di guardare al futuro e trovare il modo di rafforzare e rendere organica la presenza italiana in Australia.

Pensando anche al significato delle prossime celebrazioni del centenario della Federazione australiana, e quindi al contributo che ogni singola etnia ha dato allo sviluppo di questo Paese, ritengo che tre debbano essere le linee di azione delle autorità e della comunità italiane. Le riassumerò con tre termini: conoscersi, farsi conoscere ed esserci.

Prima di tutto: conoscersi.

Occorre contarsi, approfondire le ricerche per avere una mappatura completa della storia e della geografia della comunità italiana di Australia. Bisogna tenere conto dei matrimoni misti, dei cambiamenti di cognome, della discendenza dei primissimi immigrati. Non dobbiamo dimenticare che i primi italiani sono arrivati qui nel 1850. Circa 150 anni fa, quando le carte geografiche dell'Australia erano ancora confuse e ben prima che in questo paese sorgesse una idea di indipendenza nazionale.

Dobbiamo quindi adottare una nozione più completa di italianità, che prescindendo da quella di nazionalità e valorizzi i legami di sangue e culturali. Non è il passaporto che fa gli italiani, ma il cuore (nдр:!!!)

Secondo: farsi conoscere.

In questo campo si può e si deve fare molto di più.

L'Italia non è solo cucina e moda. È anche cucina. È anche moda. Ma non è solo questo. L'Italia è cultura – il Paese che da solo detiene oltre il cinquanta per cento del patrimonio artistico mondiale. È produzione industriale, traguardi scientifici, fermento intellettuale, sport: tutto ciò che fa una nazione moderna e vitale, che affonda le proprie radici in un passato glorioso non per cullarsi ma per trovare nuova linfa per i traguardi futuri.

*I am frequently surprised at how little we seem to know about Italy in Australia. A few who have travelled are aware of the extraordinary reality Italy is. But most have only a very vague and approximate idea. Partly to help redress this lack of awareness, the Italian authorities are adopting a series of measures.*

*Firstly, we are looking to encourage not only the flow of tourism, but also student exchange programs between Italy and Australia. In this context we are also working towards a reciprocal agreement on working holidays to allow young Italians and Australians to explore the whole gamut of what their respective countries offer, while at the same time being able to finance their own trips.*

*We are continuing to secure substantial resources for the promotion of the Italian language and culture. There are six offices responsible for the school sector attached to our Consulates, 21 associations responsible for supporting Italian language studies, two Institutes of Culture, numerous regional associations and 20 government-sponsored lecturers. This is a considerable financial and infrastructural investment that will be subsequently increased coinciding with the Olympics in Sydney and the centenary of Federation. We are working towards important cultural initiatives where these two particular events are concerned, initiatives that should contribute to a further enhancement of Italy's image in Australia.*

*As you may have noticed, our efforts are aimed above all at the younger generation because the type of relationship that exists between Italy and Australia in the future will depend on their efforts. However, we shall not neglect the needs of the older generation.*

*This commitment is important but it is not enough. We also have to work on the media and be involved with the day-to-day. This is something that only Italian Australians can do. On this point I can only offer a few suggestions.*

*As far as the relationship with the media is concerned, I think that an interesting idea might be to create an association of journalists of Italian origin. There are many organizations like this all over the world. Naturally they represent loose groupings of individuals and are non-partisan in nature because their important contribution is to the unfettered dissemination ideas. There are many of journalists of Italian origin in Australia but no one has thought to bring them together to get to know each other, share ideas, discuss strategies for how best to reach their public as well as the perception of Italians in Australia. And yet journalists are among the most influential conveyors of images and thoughts.*

Spesso con sorpresa mi rendo conto di quanto poco si sappia dell'Italia in Australia. Una minoranza, che ha viaggiato, ne conosce gli straordinari pregi. Molti ne hanno però un'idea assolutamente vaga ed approssimativa. Per ovviare in parte a queste lacune, le autorità italiane stanno predisponendo una serie di strumenti.

In primo luogo, stiamo cercando di incoraggiare non solo i flussi turistici ma anche lo scambio di studenti fra Italia ed Australia. In quest'ottica stiamo anche lavorando a un accordo di reciprocità sulle vacanze-lavoro per permettere ai giovani italiani e australiani di esplorare le realtà dei rispettivi paesi e al contempo finanziarsi il viaggio.

Stiamo poi continuando ad assicurare risorse consistenti per la promozione della cultura e della lingua italiana: sei Uffici Scolastici presso i nostri Consolati, 21 associazioni per la diffusione della lingua italiana, due Istituti di Cultura, numerosissime associazioni regionali, circa venti lettori.

Uno sforzo consistente in termini finanziari e di strutture, che sarà ulteriormente incrementato in coincidenza con le Olimpiadi di Sydney e durante il centenario della Federazione. Per queste occasioni stiamo lavorando a grosse iniziative culturali che dovrebbero contribuire ad un ulteriore "balzo di qualità" dell'immagine dell'Italia in Australia.

I nostri sforzi sono mirati soprattutto ai giovani, come avrete notato, perché è su di loro che si fonderà l'avvenire delle relazioni fra l'Italia e l'Australia. Ma non trascureremo nemmeno le esigenze delle generazioni più mature.

Questo impegno è importante, ma da solo non basta.

Occorre anche lavorare molto sui media e nella vita di tutti i giorni. E questo è qualcosa che soltanto gli italo-australiani possono fare.

Su questo punto posso solo limitarmi a dare qualche spunto.

Per quanto riguarda il rapporto con i media, ritengo che uno strumento interessante potrebbe essere la creazione di una associazione dei giornalisti di origine italiana. Organizzazioni di questo genere esistono in moltissimi paesi del mondo. Naturalmente hanno carattere esclusivamente associativo e non esprimono posizioni "di parte", ma danno un importante contributo alla circolazione delle idee. In Australia ci sono molti giornalisti di origine italiana, ma nessuno ha mai pensato di fare in modo che si possano incontrare, confrontarsi, scambiare delle idee, discutere sulla strategia di comunicazione e sulla percezione degli italiani in Australia. Eppure sono proprio loro, i giornalisti, fra i più importanti "promotori di immagine". Ritengo quindi che sarebbe sicuramente opportuna una iniziativa che permetta di aggregarli.



Therefore, I believe it is really an opportune time to launch such an initiative as this, that is, aimed at bringing them together. The glossy magazine, "Italy Down Under", could be just the vehicle to showcase the face of the 'new' Italy. Naturally the embassy would do its part.

Another avenue to explore relates to television and film. I have already mentioned the movie "Looking for Alibrandi" but around the world there are other, more stunning examples. In Brazil, for instance, Italmânia has been all the rage for months since a large, Brazilian TV station started showing a soapie called "Terra mia" which recounts the tale of Italian immigration to Brazil. The characters speak in a strange hybrid dialect of Venetian-Brazilian, or Sicilian-Brazilian; but they are very convincing. Notably, their popularity is universal, cutting across socio-economic groupings.

Interest had obviously hit fever-pitch when McDonald's created two new hamburgers: the "Mc Buono" and the "Mc Bello". "Terra Mia" is just one example of what could be done through the medium of television. So, I ask myself: why should it not be possible to do something similar here in Australia?

Up to this point we have examined what it means to know ourselves and how to get others to know us. But there is another directive we need to follow if we want to count for something; and it is expressed by the verb I employed earlier: 'to act'.

We all know that Italy is a country famous for its bell towers (famous, that is, for having many voices, making a lot of noise). According to a joke that has been around I gather for a while, take any two Italians you like and you will automatically have three political parties. Still, pluralism should not be confused with chaos. To count for something and make your voice heard, at a certain point you need, if not to speak with one voice exactly, then to present a united front. This is why there is a desperate need for a representative forum, an umbrella organization that can rally all the Italians in Australia.

In other countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Canada, the USA, the third and fourth generations are providing the leadership in their communities, even though sometimes the leaders in question do not even speak Italian but are united by the sense of having a shared ethnicity, a heritage in common.

It should be a lot easier to shape this sense of a collective in Australia, given that the country has only 'recently' been a destination for migrants. The prototype ought to be the NIAF in the United States and like organizations which can be found in other countries throughout the world.

Un veicolo di coesione potrebbe essere la stessa rivista *Italy Down Under* che si propone, nella sua veste di “glossy magazine”, di promuovere il volto della “nuova Italia”. Ma naturalmente anche l’Ambasciata sarebbe pronta a fare la sua parte.

Un’altra strada da percorrere è quella delle produzioni televisive e cinematografiche.

Ho già citato l’esempio di *Looking For Alibrandi*. Ma in giro per il mondo vi sono degli esempi ancora più eclatanti. In Brasile, per esempio, da mesi imperversa la “Italia-mania”. Fin da quando una grossa emittente brasiliana ha cominciato a trasmettere la telenovela *Terra mia*. *Terra mia* narra proprio le storie di italiani immigrati in Brasile. I suoi protagonisti parlano con uno strano accento veneto-brasiliano o siculo-brasiliano, ma sono molto credibili. Soprattutto, spopolano in tutte le fasce di popolazione.

La “febbre” è arrivata a tal punto che McDonald’s ha creato per l’occasione due nuovi hamburger: “Mc Buono” e “Mc Bello”...

*Terra mia* è soltanto un esempio di cosa si possa fare attraverso la televisione. Perché, mi chiedo, non dovrebbe essere possibile fare qualcosa del genere in Australia?

Fin qui il “conoscersi e farsi conoscere”, secondo la formula che ho utilizzato prima. Ma vi è un’altra direttrice che occorre perseguire se si vuole contare: quella che ho sintetizzato nel verbo “esserci”.

Si sa, l’Italia è il Paese dei campanili: “prendi due italiani ed avrai tre partiti politici”, secondo una battuta che credo circoli da tempo.

Pure, il pluralismo non va confuso con la dispersione. Per contare e per farsi sentire bisogna ad un certo punto essere in grado non dico di esprimersi, ma almeno di presentarsi in maniera unitaria. Per questo si fa sempre più pressante l’esigenza di un foro rappresentativo, un’organizzazione “ombrello” che raccolga tutti gli italiani d’Australia.

In altri Paesi (Brasile, Argentina, Canada, USA), le stesse terze-quarte generazioni hanno preso la guida della comunità, qualche volta senza nemmeno conoscere la lingua, ma unite dal sentimento di una comune origine, di una cultura comune.

In Australia, terra di immigrazione più recente, creare una aggregazione di questo genere dovrebbe essere ancora più agevole. Il modello dovrebbe essere quello della NIAF statunitense e di analoghe associazioni che esistono in molti altri Paesi del mondo.

*Like them, the foundation or association or council of Italian Australians should be distinguished as follows:*

- *it should be run entirely by Italo-Australians and be financially self-sufficient;*
- *it should represent all areas of Australia and all Italians and Italo-Australians;*
- *it should be supportive of the careers of the best Italo-Australians as they move variously into politics and economics, choose social and cultural paths, or the arts and sport.*

*If I had to express a wish to see something before my term as Italian Ambassador to Australia is up, it would be just this: to see a foundation established for all Italians in Australia.*

*I am convinced this would benefit greatly everyone in our local community as well as bolster the relationship between Italy and Australia.*

*The I.A.I. is an important step in this direction and I congratulate all those who have shared the dream and made it happen. A body along the lines of the NIAF (National Italian American Foundation) model is that bit closer, even if there is still a lot of work to be done, I know. We have been privy to the first, concrete signs of it today; they demonstrate that this foundation for Italian Australians is the real thing and not a mirage. With everyone helping, it will fulfill its promise; it will unite our community with renewed purpose, strength and pride.*

Come queste, la Fondazione, Associazione o Consiglio degli italiani d’Australia dovrebbe rispondere alle seguenti caratteristiche:

- essere gestita interamente da italo-australiani ed essere autonoma finanziariamente;
- essere rappresentativa di tutte le realtà geografiche australiane e di tutti gli italiani e italo-australiani;
- raccogliere il meglio della collettività italo-australiana in campo politico, economico, sociale, culturale, scientifico, artistico, sportivo.

Se dovessi esprimere un desiderio per questo mio mandato di Ambasciatore d’Italia in Australia sarebbe proprio questo: prima di lasciare questo Paese vorrei veder nascere e promuovere una fondazione per tutti gli italiani d’Australia.

Sono convinto che l’insieme della nostra comunità ne beneficerebbe enormemente. E così anche le relazioni fra l’Italia e l’Australia.

La IAI è un importante passo in questa direzione e mi felicito con quanti l’hanno fortemente voluta e realizzata. Il traguardo della NIAF mi sembra ora un passo più vicino, anche se sono consapevole che il lavoro da fare sia molto.

Le prime realizzazioni concrete cui oggi assistiamo dimostrano che quello della fondazione degli italiani d’Australia è un progetto concreto e non un miraggio. Con il contributo di tutti, sapremo tramutarlo in realtà: sapremo fare in modo che la nostra comunità trovi finalmente le ragioni, la forza e l’orgoglio della sua unità.

# Parliamentary Notes

*The Hon. Phillip Barresi MP*

*The Hon. Brian Pezzutti MP*

*The Hon. Carmel Zollo MP*

## Statement By Members of Parliament

*Hon. Phillip Barresi MP*

Mr BARRESI (Deakin) —Twenty-five years ago, an organisation was born in the United States called the National Italian American Foundation. Its specific purpose was to educate both Italian Americans and other American citizens on the Italian culture, language and traditions. Today NIAF, located in Washington DC, donates over \$US 1 million in scholarships to help young American kids pursue their education of all things Italian.

Last week the President of NIAF, Mr Joseph Cerrell, joined an illustrious group of Australians in the Italian Australian Institute's inaugural conference in Melbourne. The conference entitled In Search of the Italian Australian into the New Millennium had an ambitious agenda with over 40 respected speakers from both Australia and overseas. In the end it was hailed as a success by all. I congratulate the chairman and founder, Rino Grollo, on his vision in creating IAI, often against much criticism. His task is now to make it a truly national and representative organisation.

The creation of IAI has been a long-held dream for many, but at each previous attempt it has been hindered by personal ambition, lust for power, regional allegiances and even state parochialism. One may ask: why does the Italian Australian community feel the need to have such an organisation? After all, as the song says, 'We are all Australians.' There are a number of reasons. While the Italian Australian community may be more established than some others the stereotypes of Italian contributions still abound.

Italian Australians are still considered great restaurateurs, cane growers, tobacco growers, concreters and perhaps some other more unsavoury occupations. People forget that a number of Italian Australians have made significant contributions in the fields of law, academia, politics, commerce and the arts. Many of these people were represented at the conference last week. The IAI will ensure that the Italian contribution that has improved our nation's cultural diversity will be broadcast loud and clear. It will provide educational cultural funding to this end. And if the collective interests of the Italian Australian community is set back or prejudiced in any manner, then that injustice will be addressed. It is a function not too dissimilar to that

which is carried out by a number of organisations which look after the interests of the Jewish community. [start page 15782]

This Sunday, as those of us of Italian descent celebrate the Italian National Day, let us, as Australians, be proud of our commitment to the prosperity and the future of this land. In doing so, however, let us not forget our heritage and ancestry for the contribution that they made to this great land, Australia.

Italian Australian Institute Conference  
Legislative Council Proof Hansard  
*Hon. Dr Brian. P. V. Pezzutti*

The Hon Dr B. P. V. Pezzutti [11.07pm]: On Thursday and Friday of last week I was given leave of the house to attend the inaugural conference of the Italian Australian Institute, which is a new institute established in Victoria. The conference was launched by the Victorian Premier, during the visit by the President of the Republic of Italy. It was sponsored by the Consul-General, whom I met in Victoria. The objects of the organization are to represent and advance the interests of Italian Australians; to promote and preserve the Italian heritage and culture in Australia; to encourage teaching of the Italian language and culture in schools and universities; to help young Italian Australians with their education and careers; to work closely with government and Italian community groups; to conduct or sponsor research on issues related to the Italian Australian community; to strengthen cultural, economic, business and diplomatic links between Italy and Australia; to promote the appointment of Italian Australians in government, and to provide support and assistance to Italian Australians who have been so appointed; to help elderly and necessitous Italian Australians to obtain suitable welfare assistance and work opportunities; and to monitor the portrayal of Italian Australians in the news and media.

The conference was hosted by the chairman, Mr Rino Grollo and his wife Diana Ruzzene-Grollo, in the presence of a large gathering of important individuals. Amongst the parliamentarians in attendance were Phillip Ruddock, Con Sciacca, Carlo Furletti, Morris Iemma – from this parliament – and a number of Victorian members of Parliament, Mr Tony Stayley and the Italian Ambassador, Dr Castellaneta. Lord Mayor Frank Sartor was a guest speaker on Friday in the presence of the Deputy Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

Also present during the gathering were Diana Ruzzene-Grollo, Francis Cardinal George from Chicago, and Archbishop Pell. The guest speaker for lunch on Thursday was Justice Stephen Charles. A number of other ambassadors were also present. The whole organization was supported by a number of important sponsors with the acknowledged presence of many leading academics from across Australia, from the



Australian National University, Deakin University, Monash University, The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Swinburne University, the University of Melbourne, the University of Southern Queensland, the University of Sydney, the University of Western Australia and Victoria University. There were a number of speakers from other universities as well.

This was the first gathering of the Institute, which has an enormous future. It was held at the Park Hyatt in very pleasant surroundings and attended by a large number of people on different days. Whilst there, I had the opportunity to visit and look at some aged care facilities which had been set up by an Italian family and now handed over to a major public company. This major public company cares for people who are severely disabled in small group homes and in small settings with a very dedicated staff. It is an organization of the highest quality which should be replicated in New South Wales. I have invited the organization here to meet with Mrs Lo Po' because I think it has something very definitely to offer here in New South Wales.

The speakers were of a uniform high standard and acknowledged excellence within their own fields. The questions were most enlightening. I learnt an enormous amount from being there – about Italian culture and the two million Australians who have Italian background, but more importantly about the work that Italian Australians have to do to make this multicultural nation worthwhile to continue to live in, to be more inclusive of all the other national groups, which are of course smaller, and to ensure that multiculturalism is of benefit to both sides, for giving and for taking. It was a most extraordinary event. I pay tribute to Rino Grollo, his organization, and the director of the Institute, Mr Gaspare Sirianni, for a well-run, very positive experience. I believe that most of the people who attended would have come away from the conference thrilled to have been there and most enlivened by the conversations.

## Matter of Interest: Italian Australian Institute Conference *Hon. Carmel Zollo JP MLC*

The Hon Carmel Zollo: Along with the other members of this parliament of Italian heritage, I was invited to attend and participate in the inaugural conference of the Italian Australian Institute, held in Melbourne last week. I was pleased to be part of the conference on the last day and evening. The Institute was launched last year during the visit of the President of the Republic of Italy and is supported by the Italian Ambassador. The principal sponsor and driving force of the Institute is Mr Rino Grollo, prominent developer and Australian business identity.

The Institute is a non-political, non-profit national organization devoted to the advancement of the interests of Australians of Italian background. The conference theme was "In search of the Italian Australian into the New Millennium," which probably best sums up the aims and sentiments of the conference. The day I attended, the presenters and guest speakers ranged from the Most Reverend George Pell, Archbishop of Melbourne, to Professor Mary Kalantzis from RMIT University.

Several women of Italian background from South Australia were guest speakers: Ms Paola Niscioli, a PhD student from Flinders University; Ms Lara Palombo, a PhD student from Adelaide University; and Ms Teresa Crea, the Artistic Director of Doppio Teatro. Statistics show that there are nearly two million people of Italian origin in Australia and that it is the largest non-English speaking community.

Australia-wide, between first and second generations, the number is approximately 672,000. In South Australia, our first generation numbers 27,210, approximately, or 11.4 per cent of the first generation Australia-wide – a significant number. Our second generation numbers 37,715. Nearly 25 per cent of South Australians who were born in Italy do not speak English well: that is a significant factor in terms of access to and delivery of services, because almost one-third of this Italy-born group is over 65 years of age.

Whilst we are all part of the living history of this nation, to a great extent the future and identity of the Italo-Australian community in Australia will be shaped by the second and third generations, with each generation wanting to shape its own identity.

Among the interim list of conference recommendations, I was pleased to see the support for the Working Holiday Maker Program between Australian and Italy. Members will recall that I was the author of a motion sent from this chamber early last year to the Minister for Immigration and Cultural Affairs, supporting the continuation of talks for this program to become reality.

I had reason to write to the minister recently regarding the government's response to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration inquiry recommendations. As a result, the government agreed that, from 1 July 2000, access to the program should be limited to those countries with which Australia has a formal agreement. In the meantime, as an agreement is yet to be signed with Italy, many others in the Italo-Australian community and I are concerned that this discretion has been removed.

Two hundred and fifty young people were previously granted visas under the scheme. Minister Ruddock responded last week, expressing his belief that a formal agreement with Italy should be happening in the very near future. I hope that this is the case. Two other important issues were canvassed at the conference: the creation of a national research center dedicated to the history and culture of Italian Australians; and better cultural links between Italy and Australia, including the provision of scholarships for young people.

No culture can survive without the glue that binds it together – its language – so I was not surprised to see the call for stronger government funding for Italian language and other programs in Australian universities.

We all appreciate that the wisdom of experience and age is important and should always be respected, but the world is both rapidly changing and becoming increasingly more global.

The point was made by a participant that, if the Institute is to be the resounding success we all hope it will be, it will need to be truly national and include a fair gender representation, as well as the involvement of our young people. I wish the Institute every success and look forward to the formal presentation of the recommendations of the inaugural conference later this year.