

Lunches & Dinners

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LIBERUM ARBITRIUM (Full Power To Decide):

Italians and Jews in Australia

Mark Leibler AO

I was eight years old when I attended my first Jewish Youth Movement function. I became a leader of that Youth Movement at eighteen. So I suppose I can say that I really do not remember a time before I was involved in Jewish communal activities and the politics of the Jewish community. My older brother was also a young Jewish communal activist and my parents were both active in the community. It is not unusual to have a life long involvement in the Jewish community and for generations of families to be steeped in the tradition of communal service.

Having been involved for so long at the coalface, this forum provides me with a unique opportunity, I suppose, to look at the community's structure, to see how it has handled issues, and whether there is an established pattern to Jewish communal representation. While I readily and happily admit to being a Jewish communal activist and leader, I have never really seen myself as an expert on the Jewish community's structure.

Let me begin by saying that there is no master plan – it has been a question of evolution and trial and error, which began long before my involvement.

Whether the Jewish community's experience is relevant to any other community, or whether the lessons we have learned are applicable to the Italian community, is really for you to decide, but more of that later.

In our community of 100,000, 45,000 are in Melbourne and 40,000 in Sydney. There are hundreds of Jewish community organizations, all of which are affiliated with the two major umbrella organizations. These organizations cover cultural, spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and religious facets of the lives of the members of the community, so that it is possible for a man, woman or youth to be entertained, educated or enlightened, if they so wished, from morning until night, seven days a week. The State organizations elect their leaders, who then elect the leaders of the two Federal bodies. The leadership of the Jewish community is thus both easily identifiable and has a clear mandate. This system was well in place long before I took my first tentative steps into

communal life, and may also explain why I use the term communal politics, because the leadership structure is based on democratic elections, which occasionally rival Australian Federal politics in intensity and passion.

The religious leadership of our community is also federally structured. However, while there is a close relationship between the communal leadership and the religious leadership, they are not one and the same.

There also exists, as a separate component of the communal framework I have already described, a substantial infrastructure for services to the disadvantaged of our community addressing financial assistance, immigration, settlement, disability services, employment and training, as well as tackling the problems, which regrettably face every community, of homelessness and drugs.

The care of our elderly in Melbourne can be traced back to 1848, and caters for hundreds of people, either in nursing homes or in residential care. In our community, the education of our children is paramount, with nigh on 70% of Jewish children attending Jewish schools.

Having said all that, it may not yet be apparent what exactly the Jewish community leadership's role is.

The Jewish community leadership is elected to represent the interests and concerns of the Jewish community to both the wider community and the Australian government. In relation to the wider community, these interests include the monitoring and combating of anti-Semitism, and all forms of racial vilification leveled at other parts of the Australian community. The leadership also has a serious interest in the government's handling of matters relating to Israel, and the fostering of closer ties between Australia and Israel.

Dealing with the problem of anti-Semitism is a task, which, by its very nature, is like ploughing the sea. Jews have faced anti-Semitism for millennia, and there is, unfortunately, no point at which one can say that you have done a good job. The leadership of the Jewish community combats the problem of anti-Semitism on two levels. Most anti-Semitism stems, primarily, from ignorance and stupidity. It is for this reason that the Jewish community has initiated education programs, operated by the State Zionist Council, the Jewish Museum and Holocaust Centre, as well as other community organizations, with the aim of demystifying Judaism and exposing the wider community to Jewish traditions, culture and practices. School groups are taught about Judaism, and the rituals intrinsic to worship, and how they relate to the life of the

community. In this way, the wider community is offered a representation of Jews that transcends frequently negative stereotypes.

There is, however, a more pernicious kind of anti-Semitism, which is political, that seeks to misinform and incite prejudice, or worse, in the wider community. It is for this reason that the Jewish community monitors the right-wing media, the harassment of members of the community and anti-Semitic graffiti. We are all too aware of where such ideas can lead, not just from the tragedy of the relatively recent history of the Holocaust, but the repetitive nature of anti-Semitism in Jewish history.

Through this monitoring it is hoped we can, firstly, provide the facts, where it is possible to do so, specifically respond to serious misrepresentations, and ensure that there is no unlawfulness. We always live in the hope that we will observe a clear and steady decline in anti-Semitism.

The Jewish community's interest in racial vilification extends beyond anti-Semitism to any kind of prejudice towards minorities within society. Jewish leadership is aware that prejudice towards another minority is based on the same deceptive and malicious ideologies which underpin anti-Semitism, and that all in the Australian community need to be ever vigilant against it.

Jewish leadership has also sought to foster close relations with the leadership of other minorities to more effectively represent their joint interests and concerns to government, be they regarding racial vilification, immigration or multiculturalism. This process is achieved at different levels and through a variety of forums. The Ethnic Coalition of Australia, involving leaders of the Italian, Greek, Vietnamese, Chinese and Jewish communities, saw a proactive campaign, in 1994 and '95, to secure effective Federal Racial Vilification legislation.

It has been a long-standing practice of the Jewish community leadership to encourage and assist university student activists to go to Israel on brief study tours. The program generically called 'Young Political Leaders' Tour' saw in the early 70s, for example, Peter Costello become fully acquainted with Israel's political system, its geo-political problems and democratic institutions. Similarly, tours have been organised for journalists, scientists, and Aboriginal leaders.

Over the last ten to fifteen years the Jewish community has worked closely with government over a range of issues. Some of the areas which come to mind readily include Australia's support for the rescission of the iniquitous United Nations resolution which equated Zionism with racism. Australia was indeed the first country in the world to

unanimously pass through its Parliament a resolution opposing UN resolution 3379 and urging its formal rescission. This Australian action led to other democratic parliaments, such as the US and the European Parliament passing similar legislation. In fact, Australia's stand on this issue was a major catalyst for a number of other countries changing their position, leading to the successful UN rescission resolution in 1991.

The Jewish community leadership worked closely with the Australian government in its dismantling of the Arab Economic Boycott of Israel, Israeli goods and companies, and the black-balling of those companies which traded with Israel. And, on the other hand, the community has been involved in an enormous number of reciprocal trade, commerce, venture capital and communications delegations between Israel and various Australian states as well as the Federal government.

While clearly Israel is not central to Australia's national interest, as a global flashpoint it cannot be ignored. Australia has played a significant role in aspects of the peace process, particularly in the multilateral talks relating to water resources and through the provision of ongoing peace-keeping forces. Our community leadership was in a unique position to recognise that Australia and Israel shared the problem of scarce water resources and could benefit from Australia's leadership of those multilateral talks. These talks have led to extraordinary breakthroughs in technology, and increased understanding of the future of water management.

In the post-Gulf War period, the community's ongoing relationship with the Australian government added weight to the government's resolve to fight the proliferation of chemical weapons in the interests of global peace.

Historically, Australia has supported the security and sovereignty of Israel since its modern re-establishment in 1948. Since that time, there have been a number of occasions where the government has seen fit to consult with the community where the community's views and input are relevant.

In the twenty years or so that I have held major leadership positions, inevitably there are a number of lessons I have learned in dealing with government. Firstly, Australia will and must act in its national interest. Therefore, it is counterproductive to go to government saying, "you should do this or that, because we wish it". It must be in Australia's interest. To develop an effective relationship with government, one needs to recognise what those interests are.

I have always assumed that the Australian government will act with good will and in good faith. On those occasions where there are unexpected setbacks or issues are derailed, it is never a question of them and us. Where lines of communication break down, one must always assume that this is because of misunderstanding and never fall into the cliché of believing that there is a conspiracy acting against you. Conversely, it is most important to see your relationship with government in the long term, and where you disagree upon an issue, it is frequently positive to agree to disagree on that issue. Clearly, you will never get everything you want, so the aim of the exercise is to work within the realm of what is possible.

It is indeed unfortunate that all too often governments are readily criticised, but not often enough is tribute paid to the government when it supports a position which is consistent with yours.

When making representations to government or expressing communal concerns, expressing those concerns through the correct channels is often underrated. Knowledge of government, and with whom one should consult regarding a given issue, not only saves your own time, but is viewed as a mark of consideration and professionalism by government. It is not necessary to take every representation to the most senior relevant elected representative. Issues need to be directed to public servants, advisors and Ministers or Shadow Ministers, according to both the issue and the level of decision-making relevant to the issue.

In the case of the Jewish community, where, as I have already said, successive governments have supported Israel's integrity, security and sovereignty, relationship-building is an ongoing process. It is important, I believe, to remain bipartisan, and insofar as is possible, brief Ministers, Shadow Ministers and Backbenchers on issues relevant to your concerns.

Israel's national interest, as no doubt Italy's national interest, is represented in Australia by a first-class diplomatic corp. It is not for an Australian communal body or leader to represent the national interest of a foreign country in Australia. Our role is strictly to represent the Jewish community's view, where appropriate.

I began this address by telling you that the Australian Jewish community is 100,000 in total. This compares most dramatically with first and second generation Australians of Italian origin, whose numbers exceed 800,000. Indeed, those who claim Italian heritage exceed 1.5 million Australians. The representation of a community somewhere between 800,000 and 1.6 million poses somewhat of a challenge. I, for one, would hardly know how and where to begin to hold democratic

elections on that scale, for effective leadership. On the other hand, tens of thousands of Italo-Australians already belong to and support existing Italian community organizations. If those organizations were affiliated, then it would probably make elections for leadership of the Italian community feasible, if that were desirable.

With only differences in dialect, most Italians in Australia speak Italian. All of them trace their ancestry to Italy. By comparison, the composition of Australian Jewry is quite complex. Australian Jews speak forty languages reflecting their different histories and countries of origin. Only ten per cent of Australian Jews are native Hebrew speakers, these being Israelis who have settled here. Our only common language in Australia is English. This then poses the question for people unfamiliar with Judaism – if we have different languages, histories, and occasionally even different customs, what is it that we Jews have in common?

Regardless of where our families may have lived for centuries, we share the ancient faith, history and practices of Judaism, to which Israel is, and has always been, central. This is the basis of our community.

When I started to consider what contribution I could make to this forum, I must admit that I only had a vague understanding of the long-standing good relationship of Jews and Italians, not just in Australia, but of the strong historical links between our two communities; links of which the very small number of Italian Jews who live in Australia are extremely proud.

This led me to delve further back into history, going back to the pre-Christian era. Italy appears to be the one place in Europe where Jews lived, despite some dark interludes, in the main, happily and in peaceful coexistence. Jewish life and learning was able, by and large, to flourish, and Italian Jews have played a significant role in Italy's political life. The Risorgimento Movement being a case in point. Political equality for Jews was embraced by the Italian people, and by 1871, 11 Jews sat in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and attained outstanding positions in Italian national life, including the Prime Ministership, Minister for Finance and senior judicial positions. Shamefully, this would be almost inconceivable anywhere else in Europe.

In modern times, Anti-Semitism really only raised its head in Italy after the Abyssinian War under the Fascist regime in 1935. The fall of the Fascist regime in 1943 saw the Jews of Rome and the North under Nazi occupation, with the inevitable result that they became victims of the horror of the Final Solution.

The vast majority of Jews found the Italian people very willing to help their Jewish neighbours for humanitarian reasons alone, despite the heavy penalties they risked for their actions. In stark contrast to the rest of Europe, eighty five per cent of Italy's Jews survived the Holocaust. Historians also note that the treatment of Jews in Southern France and Yugoslavia under Italian occupation during the war was humane and enlightened, in stark contrast to the well-known Nazi treatment of Jews.

Italy, Israel and Jewish relations are, and have been, good, no doubt reflecting the Italian Fascist regime's unwillingness to participate in the atrocities propagated by her German ally. After the War, Italy and her people actively helped survivors of the Holocaust, and assisted Jews in their migration to Palestine.

Not only have Italians and Jews shared a large slice of history together in Europe, we have also experienced parallel histories here in Australia, going right back to the beginning.

Both Jews and Italians have been in Australia since the First Fleet. Italians have the distinction of mapping the Great South Land in the 17th century, and being part of the crew on the Endeavour with Captain Cook. The first Australian Jews were convicts. One, Esther Abrahams, later became the wife of the Governor, and thus the first Lady of New South Wales.

Those Italians who came to Australia as convicts were keen to return to their homeland once they had served their time. Jews, on the other hand, had no better prospects elsewhere, so they stayed. Jews stayed in the cities, became artisans and traders, while Italians often took up land as free settlers, and were more geographically spread. In the cities, Italians covered the full range of occupations and professions, and were heavily involved as labourers in infrastructure development. Italians became involved in Australian politics very early, as evidenced by Carboni's role in the Eureka Stockade. Jews did not countenance political involvement until much later. At that time their efforts were geared to looking after each other and new Jewish arrivals.

This difference in approach can, from the outset, be explained by the fact that for two thousand years, Jews have lived as a minority, frequently in precarious situations, which has led to the need to look after each other. In order to look after each other, you need to be organised. The same organisational structures could later be used to represent the community and its interests to government.

In the post-war period, Italians and Jews in Australia certainly had one thing in common, we were all refugees. The Italians were economic

refugees, and the Jews survivors of the Holocaust. We had a second thing in common – we were both brought here as factory fodder. During this period, the atmosphere of the inner city of Melbourne, in particular, was completely changed by the concentration of Jews and Italians in Carlton. We left, between us, an indelible mark which has shaped the cultural and physical life of Melbourne, and continues to do so. While we bore the brunt of adversity, of what was then a very insular and narrow-minded society, we did indeed pave the way for continuing and successive waves of immigrants.

Italian and Jewish immigration is declining, and our communities are aging. As cultures which intrinsically respect their elderly, our natural inclination has been to care for our loved ones in the family home. However, in this society, we are increasingly, if reluctantly, having to care for our aging communities in organised institutions.

At this, the beginning of the third millennium, we find ourselves, Australian Jews and Italo-Australians alike, in a very different environment from our separate and shared past. Multiculturalism is an irreversible fact, whether some people wish to embrace it or not. Globalisation, while it has brought us all closer together, has as its basis a common respect for diversity. We can celebrate our uniqueness and we have the right to represent our communities and what they stand for. Adversity is no longer our primary motivation - to either stick together, protect ourselves, or to have our voice heard in the corridors of power. Our motivation is pride in our ancient, rich cultures, and religious traditions, which are increasingly understood and embraced by the wider community, of which we are now an indivisible part.

John Salamone

Special Projects Director, NIAF, Washington USA

I appreciate the opportunity to briefly address you this evening and to offer greetings from those in America who share your wonderful Italian heritage.

As you may know, I serve as the Director of Fund Development and Special Projects at the National Italian American Foundation, a non-profit organization that has been a national voice of the Italian-American community of some 20 million for the past 25 years. I have been honored to be involved with this organization since its inception and I have seen it grow from a three person operation with donated office space to a respected national organization with 25 employees and a beautiful building in Washington, which, last year, we paid off in full.

The most important thing to understand is that the NIAF is successful because we fill a need for Italian Americans who still want to retain a part of their special heritage in a country, which, like Australia, has become a melting pot for many cultures throughout the world. We are not a local fraternal organization, but rather a unified single voice for Italian Americans as well as Italian-American organizations and clubs throughout the U.S. For these individuals and clubs we serve as a helping hand and a clearinghouse for everything possible relating to our culture and heritage. Because we are a foundation and not a traditional local membership organization, the NIAF has been able to accomplish the impossible by bringing together hundreds of smaller organizations and clubs with unique and at times very specific goals.

Administratively, the NIAF has a Board of Directors of more than 50 (candidly more than I think we need). While we are a very centralized organization, we do have a presence in virtually every major U.S. city through our Regional Vice Presidents, as well as our state and local coordinators. Our board meets three times a year and, in fact, our next meeting will be in Rome on June 6.

Our staff structure in Washington allows us to focus on major areas of concern and interest to Americans of Italian descent. Our divisions include: Scholarship; Youth Program; Culture; The Media; Public Relations; Fund Development; Membership; Accounting; Institutes (including Public Policy); White House and Congressional Liaison; Regional Liaison.

We have staff assigned to each one of these areas with corresponding board members comprising oversight committees.

Since we are a non-profit organization with substantial private and corporate funding, we conduct a full independent financial audit every year. We receive virtually no funds from the government except for a rare small grant for special projects.

As the NIAF celebrates its 25th Anniversary this year, I believe that our success lies in the fact that we have changed over the years to keep up with a changing world and a changing perception of ethnicity in America. The further in time we and our children are from Ellis Island and the large U.S. immigration of Italians at the turn of the last century, the more challenging it becomes to maintain a sense of ethnic relevance. We no longer have the Little Italies and the large percentage of inner ethnic marriages among Italian Americans which typified America only a few decades ago.

While some of the Italian Americans who join the NIAF today do it solely because of their ethnic pride, a growing number are attracted by the potential to network in business as well as provide educational opportunities for future generations through our scholarships, internships, mentoring program, career conferences and other youth activities. There is also a desire to reach out beyond our own community to those who have not shared in America's prosperity. One of our newest programs, called Gardens of Hope, establishes gardens in the poorest areas of our major U.S. cities in order to benefit the homeless and those in shelters. The gardens remind us of our parents and grandparents who always found room for their vegetable gardens and sometimes a delicate fig tree that they nursed through every winter.

While I am only now, learning more about the Italians who have immigrated to Australia, I feel that we are on parallel courses and we can help each other to ensure that as our countries grow and prosper, we will always see the value of embracing a culture, history and sense of family and duty that has become the legacy of all whose ancestors came from Italy.

I thank you for keeping this spirit alive in Australia, and I thank you for making me a part of this important gathering.

His Honour Justice Stephen Charles

Buon anniversario. Mi piacerebbe molto presentare questo discorso in Italiano. Ma se provassi a farlo, immediatamente esaurirei il mio vocabolario.

For the benefit of anyone here who speaks no Italian, and for the benefit of everybody else who naturally could not follow my pronunciation, I said that I would very much like to give this talk in Italian, but if I had attempted to do so, I would immediately have exhausted my vocabulary, rather like that wonderful man Roberto Benigni in Hollywood when he was receiving his Oscar for *La Vita è Bella*.

There are risks involved in inviting a judge to speak at your lunch. Some time ago a newly-appointed Chief Justice of my Court received a letter of congratulations on his appointment comparing him with a sea captain taking command of a Quinquereme of Nineveh, on the ground that his cargo consisted of ivory, apes, and peacocks. When I was first appointed to the new Court of Appeal in its recently refurbished premises, I sat down at my new desk and the telephone rang for the first time. My caller asked "Is that the Free Legal Service?" It had not previously occurred to me, but I told my caller, I was sorry, I was only a judge. The response, expletives deleted, was "I don't want a --- judge."

Some time ago a survey was undertaken of audience responses at conferences such as these, and I am indebted to *The Age* for publication of the results. The survey found that only 10% of those present actually listened to what was said. 20% were physically present, but mentally elsewhere, 20% were asleep and 50% were engaged in sexual fantasy. What I am about to say is directed, of course, to the 10%, and I will try not to disturb the sleepers.

My friends with Italian connections tell me that most Italian-Australians either migrated from rural communities, particularly southern Italian, during the 1950s or 1960s, or are the children of parents who migrated in those decades. For this community, a source of great pride is the achievement that so many of the children of these migrants have gained representation in the professions. This has been, as it was explained to me, the result of Italian migrants' strong commitment to education, community advancement, the stability of kinship, and extended family ties allowing the sharing of resources within wider

family groups; although mobility and exogamy have to some extent broken down these extended kinship ties. Elderly Italian-Australians are now frequently clustered by membership in Italian clubs, organizations and homes. The community is still notable, my friends tell me and the evidence suggests, for its low crime rate, low rate of alcoholism, high rate of self-employment and low rate of divorce – all attributable to the strong community and familial ties which still exist in the Italian-Australian community.

I too arrived as a 12-year-old migrant from England in 1949. My own schooling, common for those in England in the 1940s and only a little less so in Australia of the 1950s had considerable links with Italy. I learned Latin from the age of 6 until I left school. We were taught about Julius Caesar's campaigns in Gaul and the invasion of Britain itself in 55 BC when Caesar's objective was "to teach the natives a lesson", and the Claudian invasion, nearly 100 years later, when the Romans were bent on permanent conquest. I remain puzzled as to why Caesar and the Romans wanted to go to Britain. To a civilized Mediterranean gentleman, Britain could only have seemed wet, very cold, dull and full of barbarians, a thoroughly unattractive place. Yet, to Rome, which had conquered nearly all the known world, like Mount Everest it was there. In addition to the invasion, we studied Vergil's Aeneid, Livy on Hannibal's invasion of Italy, the battles of Cannae and Lake Trasimene, and the cunning of Fabius Maximus, the general known as the Cunctator for his brilliant delaying tactics which exasperated and finally exhausted Hannibal's Carthaginians. We read Catullus's poems and Cicero's letters and his speeches (beginning when in his mid-20s) in the law courts, some of which influenced me in early days here at the Bar. Now, Cicero was a very great man, but I rather doubt that copying Cicero in a Melbourne Magistrates' Court in the 1960s did me any particular favours. In history we studied the Renaissance and later the unification of the Italian states and the always interesting, often thrilling, exploits of Mazzini, Garibaldi, and Count Camillo Benso di Cavour. When one also realizes that William Shakespeare was actually a Sicilian, born in Messina, and in truth named Michelangelo Florio Crollanza, a revelation for which I am indebted to Professor Martino Iuvara (who surely must be Sicilian), it becomes easier to understand why 15 of the great Bard's 37 plays have an Italian background. Some rather boring English sceptics do not yet accept this discovery, but I have no doubts.

The list of famous Italians of genius in every branch of the civilized arts is frankly preposterous in its length. There is a plethora of poets, sculptors, painters, musicians, composers, writers, all of the very first

magnitude; so also political philosophers, military leaders, generals, admirals, navigators, scientists, astronomers and religious thinkers. To embark on naming names would be idle. The list would fill a telephone book – even if the compilation of would be engrossing.

But it is not so easy now for the young Australian to study, to become engrossed in these delights. Most schools do not teach Latin or Greek, and children rarely study ancient history. Subject to the increasing availability of the Internet, our children have much less opportunity in Australia than if they were living in Europe to experience the cultural marvels, the architecture, the wonderful diversity that is Italy now.

If what I am about to say is thought presumptuous, it is nevertheless based on my own personal experience. In 1974 my wife and I adopted a Vietnamese boy, then five months old. During his upbringing we encouraged our son as much as we could to learn the Vietnamese language, and the history and customs of his country. We had many Vietnamese friends who were prepared to help. But he wanted to play football, to learn about the outback, the Australian way of life, to be more Australian than the Australians. He learned no Vietnamese language or history. He is now 26. Some years ago he went back to visit Vietnam. He now speaks the language well, though, naturally enough with an Australian accent. He is becoming aware of Vietnam's proud history. He is very well employed working for an Australian company in Vietnam. He plays Australian rules football for the Saigon Saints ensuring his place by organizing the team's beer supply. It is perfectly clear that his new language skills and his discovery of his Vietnamese heritage have enriched his life, and given him much greater confidence, an assurance and stability beyond his years, and significantly improved his career prospects. Our whole family is very proud of him.

I would not want anything I say today to be taken as detracting from the values of the Australian way of life. Those of us who have come to live here permanently, I have no doubt, are all proud to call ourselves Australians. We are in large measure a country of migrants and we derive great advantage from our diversity. Our children are well-educated and hard-working and greatly in demand in law firms, in hospitals, in research laboratories and in business in Europe, America and Asia.

But what I want to say is that the young Australian of Italian origin has some enormous advantages over the monolingual Australian. He or she is the beneficiary of the heritage of Italy, and usually has the opportunity to speak Italian in the home, and ready access to Italian speakers and teachers. Some of my Italian-Australian friends tell me that

not infrequently their youngsters, like my son, want to be totally Australian, and reject or maybe just bypass the language and knowledge that is theirs for the taking. If this is the fact, think how much are they giving away, what an opportunity they are missing, and how much will they regret what they have lost in later life.

Those who contemplate post-graduate degrees or research, or employment opportunities overseas would surely think, in medicine, of specialists such as Professor Ivano Bertini at the Magnetic Resonance Centre in Florence; the Italian hand surgeon from Milan, Dr Marco Lanzetta, who has participated in recent hand transplant surgery; or wish to learn of the work of Nobel prize winners such as Renato Dulbecco in cancer research and Rita Levi Montalcini; in architecture, they would think of Paolo Portoghesi, the doyen of Rome architects, Gae Aulenti of Milan, Renzo Piano of Genoa; in physics another Nobel Laureate, Carlo Rubbia from Gorizia, working in fast particle research or Tullio Regge; in astrophysics, Dr. Margherita Hack, formerly a director of the Trieste Astronomical Observatory, who has studied the atmospheres of stars and the observable effects of stellar evolution; in industrial design, Giorgetto Giugiaro; in legal philosophy, Norberto Bobbio; among the great orchestral conductors Riccardo Muti or Claudio Abbado; or for the young lawyer interested, say, in the development of an International Criminal Court, those responsible for the recent Rome Diplomatic Conference held to foster the establishment of such a Court.

Of course, I have not scratched the surface. I have not yet mentioned Italy's splendid engineers, or the motor car industry, fashion, literature, style, and so many other areas where Italians excel and where someone lucky enough to have an Italian connection would naturally wish to pursue this advantage.

Young Australians with Italian connections will want to spend as much time as their wallet permits in Italy. How much will they miss if they cannot speak the language, and have not beforehand steeped themselves in their Italian heritage.

Compare the Australian of Italian origin who is camouflaging or masking that connection, with the other who speaks Italian, is primed with knowledge of Italy's glorious past, and rightly proud of the country's bountiful present achievements. Who will deal better with prejudice, teasing or ignorant abuse in the classroom, the pub, the dance floor or the football field? Surely the latter. And in these days of globalization, when trade between Italy and Australia is likely to increase dramatically, when tourism in each direction is likely to grow

exponentially, which of the two has the better prospects of diverse and gainful employment? Which is the more likely to be a complete and confident citizen of Australia and the world?

At the heart of all this is the ability to speak the language. It should be a treasured possession. I began learning Italian some two years ago. I regret very much I began so late in life. I would like to be able to read Dante in the original, to understand (rather than merely watch) *Telegiornale*, to engage in real conversation with Italian speakers. If I am spared long enough I intend to do all these things. But I should say that the Italian Government is to be congratulated on the support it has given to the teaching of the Italian language in Australia. Very few other governments give like support, and none with the same generosity. But there is surely some real advantage also to the Italian Government in this generosity, which must have benefited both the Australian and Italian-Australian communities as well. Italian is now, I believe, the most widely taught second language in Australia, many Australians without an Italian connection benefit as well – I myself go weekly to Co.As.It. for Italian lessons – and the consequences inevitably include better relations and tolerance in the community at large.

In so far as I have a message today, it is that the young Italian-Australian should speak Italian, should know as much as possible about Italy and all things Italian, and should celebrate and glory in his or her Italian connection.

In other words, I absolutely support the aims of this Institute.

E per me, non ho intenzione di gettar la spugna. Farò il diavolo a quattro per imparare italiano.

Vi ringrazio dell' ascolto.

The Italians in Sydney

The Right Hon. Frank Sartor, Lord Mayor, The City of Sydney

It was English novelist and satirist Evelyn Waugh who claimed that “no country was civilised until it had been conquered by Rome”. Sydney in 2000 may not have been conquered by Rome, but the gradual infusion of Italian influences on life here has been occurring since the colony began.

Changing Sydney’s culture was not part of the government’s plan when it launched its post war immigration programs – but it may have been its most significant outcome.

In less than two generations, Sydney has moved from being a smallish Anglo-Celtic town in the ‘wrong’ half of the world, to one of the most interesting cities on earth.

The fact that the 2nd largest ethnic group – after the British - living here is Italian has had a lot to do with it. Italians have shaped the way the city looks, the way we eat, the pastimes we follow and the way we see ourselves.

Sydney is a city of breathtaking natural beauty. There is no history of Sydney, no guide book, no travel brochure, that does not begin without talking about the beauty of the harbour - its craggy cliffs, its sparkling waters, its outstanding seafood.

And Sydney is a warm city, a sunny city, a city where the sandstone glows gold in the sunlight and the people are friendly. It’s a new city, with a raffish past. A city shaped by individuals, not governments. A city that is boisterous, and carefree, where enterprise can thrive, and self-reliance matters, where, in the words of Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, “a little bit of cheating may sometimes be called for”.

A city where opportunism and pragmatism, hard work and risk-taking pay off.

In so many ways, Sydney is an Italian city.

The Italian presence in Sydney predates the First Fleet. The explorer James Matra sailed with Captain Cook and is remembered today in the Sydney suburb of Matraville. In 1825, Francesco Nicola Rossi was appointed as Superintendent of Police in Sydney– a rather unpopular choice at the time, given the very British nature of the colony.

Larger numbers of Italians began coming here in the gold rushes, and the late 1800s. In fact, this is when one of my favourite Sydneysiders - Dr

Tommaso Fiaschi came here from Tuscany. Fiaschi went to Queensland first, in 1877, but soon saw the error of his ways and headed to Sydney. Fiaschi became a surgeon at Sydney Hospital.

He went to the Boer War, (where, incidentally, he met the grandson of Garibaldi - fighting for the Boers. Later, in WW1 they met up again, this time fighting on the same side.) Fiaschi is also alleged to have run off with a nun. Although whether she was still a nun at the time is a bit unclear. Fiaschi's son was a noted physician too, with a long association at Sydney Hospital. In 1968, his daughter presented Sydney with the replica of the *Il Porcellino* of Florence. It stands proudly at the front of the Hospital in Macquarie Street, one of Sydney's most popular pieces of public art.)

By the late 19th century, Sydney was 'improving' itself by the conscious addition of Italian traces. Italian elements were incorporated into city buildings, Italian architects & engineers helped build them, Italian artisans decorated them. It is a pattern that has continued. I refer to things like:

- The scenes of everyday life on the GPO, carved in 1880 by Tommaso Sani,
- The Italianate flourishes of the Lands Department building in Bridge Street,
- The 1897 Phillip Fountain in the Botanic Gardens by Achille Simonetti,
- The mosaic floor in the crypt of St Mary's cathedral, created by the Melocco brothers,
- The colonnade at East Circular Quay, compared by Bob Carr to the markets in Bologna.

At the time of Federation in 1901 there were 6,000 Italian-born people living in Australia. By 1939 the number had grown to over 40,000 and Italians were biggest non-British group. Over half a million more Italians migrated to Australia in the period between 1945 and 1980. As the chain of migration grew, and sons brought brothers, wives, cousins, parents, Sydney became home to a new kind of enterprise: the family business. The Italian migrants were greengrocers, fishmongers, bakers, barbers, bootmakers, and market gardeners. The basic economic unit was one their British neighbours did not rely on: the extended family. Many of these people were peasants - they did not draw any separation between work and family life.

Communal living and labour were the norm. Everyone in the family contributed something; everyone was sustained by what was produced.

Operating this way meant often working harder and longer than their Anglo-Celtic counterparts, and soon they become a unique force in the commercial world, running what we now call SMEs - operations that were distinctively different from what had been seen here before.

The 'Italian way' was felt in other reaches of life. Sydney in the 60s and 70s was slowly beginning to change. 'Italian' was becoming synonymous with 'style'.

Audrey Hepburn had started things going when she took a Roman Holiday in 1953,

and when Fellini's multiple award-winning film *La Dolce Vita* was released in 1960, the appeal of Italy and all things Italians increased. Sydney's bohemians emulated Italian style by drinking late-night espressos at Ozzie Comati's Piccolo Bar in Kings Cross, or early morning cappuccinos with boxer Luigi Coluzzi at his Bar Coluzzi in Darlinghurst. Both cafes had opened in the early 1950s - and a visit to the Piccolo Bar in 1959 by Frank Sinatra gave it overnight appeal.

Italian food and dining have played a crucial role in making Sydney the city it is today. The first eggplant supposedly went on sale in Sydney in 1954, around about the time that Beppi Polese took over a Yugoslav café in East Sydney and started serving real Italian food to a mostly Italian clientele. Australians by this time were waking up to the fact that food might have much more potential than their British heritage led them to believe. At least some adventurous Anglos came to Beppi's restaurant, game to try something new. However, Beppi - who clambered on the Spit Bridge each morning to gather fresh mussels, met with resistance. He could only educate Sydneysiders into new ways of eating by giving them food for free. Even then, the plates of calamari or clams on offer were returned untouched - food like that, they said, was bait.

More than forty years have passed since Beppi's opened for business, and- things have changed. Sydney's restaurants in 2000 are original and stylish, the food scene is one of our greatest attractions. Competition is fierce, with constant innovation.

Australian chefs blend Italian traditions with foods of the Asia Pacific to create a cuisine uniquely our own. Just this month, Vogue Travel has an article praising the Italian influence in Sydney's contemporary restaurants.

Beppi's enterprise spawned some of Sydney's other top Italian restaurants. One of his waiters started D'Arcy's, his son and wife run Mezzaluna. And the Italian restaurant plays a role in more than just our

culinary life. Very few major deals are done in this city without lunch at Mezzaluna, Bel Mondo, D'arcys, Lucio's, or Buon Ricordo.

The adoption of Italian food signalled a deeper change - an acceptance that life was meant to be enjoyed and that Sydney was the right place to do it.

It was not just via the palate that Italians wrought changes to Sydney. In the 1960s and early '70s Sydney underwent an immense transformation. A confluence of factors: economic changes, the lifting of building height restrictions, 'mutable' planning regulations, all sparked a massive change in Sydney's CBD. The city was modernised and changed beyond recognition, (not always for the better) - a process that has never really stopped. Italians, with their love of form and structure, and their engineering & design ability, came to dominate the construction industry. Tristan Antico, Franco Belgiorno-Nettis, Carlo Saltieri, the Grollos, have all been major shapers of the city that has emerged. They and their counterparts in other industries are migrants who became magnates. They came to the forefront in Australian commerce and industry, and were dubbed 'The New Boy Network'. At Number 1 Martin Place, the Grollo Group has given new life to a wonderful Sydney landmark. A building that was once the heart of the city, is alive once again, in one of the most impressive redevelopments ever seen here. Sydney, like any other great city, now boasts buildings by the worlds' greatest architects, and the completion of architect Renzo Piano's Aurora Place is only months away.

By the 1980s, Italians in Sydney were appearing at the top of many fields: Salvatore Zoffrea, frequent winner of major art prizes; Aldo Guirgola, designer of Parliament House Canberra; fashion designer and business leader Carla Zampatti; the Cerrone family jewellers; the Melocco brothers stonemasons.

However Italian migrants who 'made good' did not only make names for themselves.

Many have become prominent leaders in Sydney's cultural and community life. For example, Transfield have sustained Australia's contemporary arts scene first through the Transfield Art Prize, (1961-73), and then by founding, (with government support), the Biennale of Sydney. And the Grollos have contribution to Sydney's public spaces with their support of the Sydney Sculpture Walk.

In the wider community, a generation of shopkeepers and market gardeners profited and invested. Economically secure Italians began to disperse, moving out of their traditional inner city enclaves & spread

throughout Sydney's suburbs. An educated younger generation did not necessarily take over the family business. Italian names began to appear:

- in politics – Sandra Nori, George Paciullo, Maurice Iemma
- in sport – David Campese, Christian Vieri, Paul Romano
- in film - Greta Scacchi, Anthony La Paglia, Pia Marchetta
- in print - Paolo Totaro, Anna Maria Dell'oso, Melina Marchetta
- and even on Government Boards - Marco Belgiorno Zegna.

The boundaries are now blurred - there is no longer a clear us and them. A cultural fusion has taken place. And that is a major achievement - something we can be particularly proud of. It is a big step letting go of your home and moving somewhere new. It takes passion and commitment, determination and perseverance.

If we look at what are the features are of Italian business - particularly small to medium value added enterprises - both in Australia and in Italy - we find these very qualities. They are the qualities that have helped Italy to become one of the strongest economies in the world. The health of Italian business is far less dependent on federal government than here in Australia, where the economy is affected even by an election.

Political changes do not bother people much in Italy.

Not only have these qualities helped create a wealthy and strong Italy, they have helped make Australia - and Sydney - what it is today.

Sydney in 2000 has embraced Italy with a vengeance. Of course, that creates its own problems - like the Sydney chap visiting Rome who made the mistake of asking - in the abbreviated way we do in Sydney - for a 'latte'. Apparently he sat bravely in the café with his glass of milk, as if that is what he had wanted all along. Many of our first Italian settlers would recognise the feeling of not getting it 'quite right'. But they, like the Sydneysider in Rome, kept on going. And in the end, their values, their inspiration, their energy and their sense of community found fertile soil.

I am pleased to have this opportunity to be reminded of the struggles made by previous generations of Italians, and the heights they reached. I feel proud & humble, and I realise how things have changed - my sons now boast of their Italian heritage!

Learning to live constructively with difference has been described as 'the great challenge of this century. (Stuart Hall, "Culture, Community, Nation": *Cultural Studies* Vol 7, Pages 349-363)

We have risen to this challenge. We have learned how to taste and experience the rich inheritance of our forefathers, and to meld it into something that is greater and richer than the sum of its parts.

In Sydney, this inheritance has created a city that I am proud to call home. A city that I shall be proud to show to the world, in just a few short months time, as we celebrate the biggest multicultural celebration in the world, the 2000 Olympic Games.

**The Lord Mayor of Sydney, Frank Sartor was introduced by
Councillor Clem Newton Brown who said:**

“It’s my pleasure on behalf of the City of Melbourne to join you today for the first National Conference of the Italian Australian Institute. I bring greetings and best wishes for a fruitful meeting from the Lord Mayor, Councillor Peter Costigan, who is unfortunately ill and unable to be here today.

I know Peter would have liked to welcome you to Melbourne; a vital City, renowned for its unique lifestyle, cosmopolitan culture, as well as its excellent shopping, restaurants, open space and enterprising spirit. We are a truly multicultural City and Melbourne is particularly proud of its Italian heritage and cultural influences, that you will feel and see all around the City.

One simple example is the espresso machine, it’s so entrenched here that young Melburnians probably think that we invented it. Yet it was only a few decades ago that the first machines were installed in Pelligrini’s in Bourke Street and the University Cafe in Lygon Street. Italian culture now permeates life throughout Melbourne in a very positive way. I was talking to Councillor Pace about this point this morning and in her words, Melburnians have taken to the Italian lifestyle like ducks to water.

We are pleased that the Lord Mayor of Sydney, Frank Sartor is with us today in this Olympic year when our two cities are welcoming visitors from all around the world. You may know that the people of Melbourne have a passion for sports, sports of all kinds, and are eagerly anticipating the start of the Games in Sydney.

But, don’t forget that the first event of the Games will be in Melbourne; the soccer. Immediately prior to that we are hosting the World Economic Forum and we’re hopeful that many more people will visit Melbourne after the Games in Sydney. So we anticipate a very big year for both our cities. We trust that you will have a successful meeting in Melbourne and it’s now my great pleasure to introduce the Lord Mayor of Sydney Frank Sartor.”

The Honourable Steve Bracks
Premier of Victoria

Your Excellency Sir James Gobbo, Governor of Victoria, and Lady Gobbo; Your Excellency Dr Giovanni Castellaneta, the Ambassador of Italy to Australia; Dr Gianni Bardini, the Consul General of Italy in Victoria; Your Eminence, Francis Cardinal George, the Archbishop of Chicago; Your Excellency, Archbishop Francesco Canalini; Rino Grollo, of course, who deserves special mention as a person who contributes to the Victorian community enormously and as someone who deserves the government's congratulations as someone who does not just do things and build, but also gives back to our community - congratulations to you and your family, Rino, for what you have done for Victoria; leaders of the Italian community, who are indeed leaders of the Victorian community; fellow Parliamentarians in Victoria, Carlo Carli, Helen Shardey, Carlo Furletti; and I think there are other MPs from other states here and I welcome them also; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen: Buona sera. And that is as good as I can get.

I am very very pleased to be here this evening. And I understand, from looking at the program, from talking to some of you here about the last three days, that it has been a very impressive range of issues that have been discussed at this conference: everything from trade to culture, from welfare to globalisation. It is a reflection, if you like, of the depth of engagement in the Italian community that the issues you have addressed covered such scope and such breadth across Australia, across Victoria, and internationally as well.

The issues that you have debated are the issues that occupy our government as well, here, in Victoria: the international standing of Australia as a multicultural nation; cultural continuity in a diverse society like Victoria's; and the future of multiculturalism and how it can be embraced and built on as we develop our community in this state. The Italian community has made an enormous contribution to Australia's prosperity, to our cohesion and our maturity as a society.

Of course, as we all know, it is the biggest non-Anglo Saxon ethnic community in Victoria and Australia. Italy is our second-biggest, European trading partner with \$3.5 billions of trade coming in to the Australian economy, of which one third is coming into Victoria. As such, this trade is of economic importance to Victoria and Australia. In fact it

is very hard to imagine Victoria, to imagine Melbourne, without the Italian community. And let us just pause there; imagine how less diverse, how less interesting, how less culturally enriching it would be if we did not have the Italian community here in Victoria. And it is not as if we are identified as the Italian community; it is really part of the Victorian community.

If you look right around the state, of course, you can see that diversity not just in Melbourne but right around Victoria as well. It is a community also that has encouraged and embraced multiculturalism and diversity within the state as other cultures in our community have done.

We ourselves, the government, have big plans for responding equally to our culturally diverse community and for adding value to it. In addition to my role as Premier, as some of you may know, I have also taken the role of Multicultural Affairs Minister which is a sign of the government's commitment to a total-government approach in multicultural affairs.

Multiculturalism is not just one sub-set program of one department; it is across everything we do, across the whole of government. Whether it has to do with transport, health, education, trade, multiculturalism is a part of everything we do in this state and we want to make sure we embrace that.

And that is certainly one of the reasons I have that portfolio. From the post-war period to the present, multiculturalism has been a fundamental part of Victoria's identity. It is the foundation of our tolerance, our creativity and our energy.

Indeed, ours is one of the most culturally diverse countries anywhere in the world. Over 200 nationalities are represented in the Victorian population and that diversity is a part of what defines us. Part of that diversity, I guess, is reflected in me, the first non-Anglo-Saxon background Premier in Victoria. I have a Lebanese background, going back a long way to the turn of the century, to the 1890s, a time, regrettably, when it was important to merge into the rest of the community. But of course we now have the benefits of being enriched by the many nations that have come and continue to come into Victoria and Australia which has made life much easier.

Being from Ballarat, I know that our multiculturalism exists not just in Melbourne; and consider Raffaello Carboni, who was one of the leaders in the Eureka Stockade rebellion, a very important part of our history here in Victoria. Ballarat was the birthplace of democracy, the first time that we stood up as a nation and said that we wanted a nation

separate from the United Kingdom. And we said that we also did not want taxation without representation. And really, that fellow Carboni was one of the leaders of that movement for democracy and for the need to stand up for our community. He was one of the only people who kept an eye-witness record of the Eureka rebellion, one which is such an important part of our history.

And you can continue seeing outside Melbourne the signs of the Italian presence everywhere. I know, for example, that Stefano De Pieri is here (he is a good friend from a long way back), well I think his is probably the best restaurant anywhere in Victoria: Stefano's Cantina. It is very good.

In fact with friends and associates I have made two special trips, just for Stefano's Cantina, and that says something. And, of course, the whole Italian community in Mildura, the rich community there, and the fresh produce of that area used for Italian cuisine, have been one of the great features of what Stefano has brought to our screens and brought to our regional areas, as well.

I know recently also that we had an event in Victoria: the by-election in Benalla. Well I had enormous pleasure in being with people from the area around Myrtleford, which hosts a big Italian community also; a community which embraced the new government. I am very pleased and grateful to them for that.

History has shown that multiculturalism is a boon to Victoria in the wealth of languages, culture and skills that it has brought to our state.

Multiculturalism informs the way we see our future. We believe we can sustain harmony alongside diversity. And that is certainly what we are aiming for here in this state. We believe that in an increasingly globalised world, Victoria's diversity puts it in a very strong position. We have a great reservoir of skills. We have our expertise, experience and understanding of diversity.

And our government believes in strength through diversity. We have pride in our heritage, as we should have, and confidence in ourselves.

And this confidence in our heritage is what we are building on both here in Australia and also internationally. I am very grateful for the opportunity to be here with you tonight, to congratulate you on what you have achieved as a community, right across Australia; and, of course, what you have achieved as a most significant community within Victoria. You are part of the fabric and design of this state.

I am very positive about this conference, the inaugural one for the Italian Australian Institute. And congratulations, Rino, again, to you and

to the other people who have been involved in this. I am sure it will be one of many to come. I salute you. I salute the Italian community. Thank you for your contribution to our multicultural society and our diverse community.

I look forward to a close association in the future. Congratulations.

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

Your Excellency Sir James and Lady Gobbo, Mr Premier Steve Bracks, Your Excellency Archbishop Canalini, dear friends, I am really deeply honoured to be part of this closing banquet bringing to an end the historic conference on the search of Italian Australian identity in the New Millennium. I am grateful that you have asked me but to tell you the truth I am not entirely certain why you have asked me. Non capisco molto bene perchè mi trovo qui da voi stasera. Non sono italiano, non sono australiano e davvero stasera non sto cercando la mia identità personale (I do not understand very well why I am here with you this evening. I am not Italian, I am not Australian and this evening I am certainly not looking for my own personal identity). Nonetheless whatever reason was in your mind for inviting me, I am not only honoured but deeply pleased that you have.

It is not my first visit to Melbourne but each time that I have come here I have been reminded in some important ways of my own city of Chicago. Our weather is worse than yours but we are also a city built around a river near a great body of water and more than that both cities were built in the same decades of the last century and therefore there is a certain sense of being at home, in the social history as well, because both cities have received over the decades many waves of immigrants and among these many Italians. Here, I understand, the largest wave of immigration from Italy was after the Second World War in the nineteen fifties, nineteen sixties. In Chicago it occurred after the First World War, a generation earlier; and since it is usually people who are not so well off economically who migrate, most of the migrants from Italy to the United States, at least to the mid-west and particularly to the rural parts of the mid-west and therefore to the capital, if you like, of the mid-west, Chicago, were from Sicily and Calabria. Accompanying them were their spiritual leaders, the Scalabrini Fathers and the sisters associated with them, the Serviti di Maria, the Salesiani.

They established, as Catholics, national parishes, in very very clearly distinguished neighbourhoods of the city. They established, in the way in which Italians are noted for their deep family life, homes for the aged and other social institutions. They created shrines which reproduced, to a certain extent at least, the religious life that was based in particular

devotions in the villages from which they came. The social clubs that were established, however, remained quite local, very often rooted in Italian villages and Italian realities in Italy itself. And therefore, socially, the Italian Americans perhaps had less influence than other groups, at least until the present generation. The social history is complicated by the fact that during the Federal Government's unfortunate experiment with the Prohibition of Alcohol in the twenties and thirties in the United States, there was a great growth of organised crime and some Italian names were associated with that. Some of the myths and the stereotypes therefore around Italian identity remain unfortunately present even in current television productions and the rest.

The church that received them was heavily Irish, but not so predominantly Irish as the Australian Church is. There were many other groups, mostly but not exclusively from Europe, before the Italians and many others had come since. There were the Germans and the Poles, the Bohemians, the Slovaks, the Lithuanians, others from eastern Europe, the French-Canadians, more recently Spanish speaking Catholics from Mexico, Portorico and Central America. What seems to have distinguished the Italians in much of this was the way in which they lost their language more quickly than many of the other immigrant groups. I am not quite sure why that should have been the case except that there was a great eagerness to truly enter into the American experience, and the language seemed to be something that they could afford to lose, although culturally they remained identifiable and in their faith they remained Catholic. This unfortunate loss, unfortunate not only for Italian-Americans but for all of us, is now being looked at and very recently I have had a long conversation with the Consul General of Italy in Chicago, to see how we can begin again the study of the Italian language in the Catholic schools of the Archdiocese and all the schools not just those where there are people with Italian names.

In general this follows the pattern in the United States that follows your pattern here of a new appreciation for a multiculturalism and a way in which it is necessary for languages once deliberately abandoned, particularly after the Second World War, now have to be restored in some fashion in order to have a genuinely vibrant society, but more than that, in order to have a global society, one that is able to exist and flourish in a new situation in the world today, which tells us clearly that no country and no people and no culture can exist in isolated fashion.

I think Italians knew this always because Italian culture is first of all a humanism, there is always a universal dimension in Italian culture and therefore it is a culture that has influenced the West and the world.

These days in Chicago in a very important Research library called the Newbury Library, there is an exhibition which the Newbury Library has put together with the Bibliotheca Lorenziana in Florence called Florentine Humanism in the early Rinascimento. The text that had been borrowed from Florence and the typographical studies are translations and commentaries on not just Greek and Latin pagan authors, which is what we usually think of when we think about the Renaissance but rather in Florence with the Greek and Latin fathers of the Church and in these works that are now on exhibit in Chicago for some months the translations are there as inspirations for dialogue with a culture that is truly universal, a spirituality based in a universal faith, a global religion.

The phenomenon which we call globalisation today, which is a topic that I have addressed here and in Sydney at the invitation of the Australian Bishops' Commission, is one that was prepared in the providence of God by two events, one ecclesiastical and one secular.

We think of the Second Vatican Council as a sea change in the Church herself but there is another way of looking at that council called together by John XXIII a way that I think he looked at it, a way to heal the wounds of the world. For this marvellous pope, who will be beatified soon, John XXIII lived through the bloodiest decades of this century which (the last century now) which had been some of the bloodiest decades of human history and he saw how nation attacked nation in the First World War, how Catholic killed Catholic, how in the name of the divisions of Nation States human unity had been lost. He saw how in the name of class divisions Marxist countries arose in the name of social justice that put to death members of particular classes. He saw how in the name of a racist ideology a master race, an entire people, the Jewish people were condemned to extermination, the Slavic peoples were condemned to serfdom and he asked, and you can hear his asking that question in the homily that he preached when he opened the first session of the Second Vatican Council. He asked who will tell the human family that it really is one. That no culture, no people, no group can exist isolated, and so out of the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council comes the self-understanding of the Church, not only as people of God and body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit but in one line in *lumen gentium* the Church is described as the sacrament of the unity of the human race, the visible sign of unity of all men and women who call themselves human beings. That was the theological preparation and it was the deliberate design of an Italian humanist, an Italian prelate, a great saintly man, John XXIII, who saw the world and prepared

theologically for the phenomenon that we are now experiencing and call globalisation.

The second event, secular but nonetheless equally important I believe, which transformed human consciousness was the Apollo VIII space flight in 1969 when, for the first time, the globe was seen in a photograph taken from outer space. This marvellous thing of beauty, this piece of jade, blue and green and brown without national frontiers, with only the continents seen on the surface of the earth and a moment therefore when our imagination was transformed because we did not need cartographers any longer. We did not need an Amerigo Vespucci who had to discover what America might look like by extrapolating the data in such a way that he could come up with the first maps of the Western hemisphere. An Italian cartographer whose great skill enabled us to imagine how the whole of America, North and South and Central would look until we finally had the picture itself, the evidence that Vespucci was right in the drawings that he made.

I thought to myself when I saw that magnificent photo for the first time, I still remember it clearly, where I saw it in New Orleans, when I saw it, I was a graduate student, where I saw it on the cover of Life magazine, thinking that human self-consciousness will never again be able to fragment itself as it has so often when despite humanist philosophies such as Italy has given the world, despite maps of the world such as Italian cartographers have made we have still continued to kill one another in the face of divisions that should be gifts rather than obstacles.

I thought to myself, how happy one Italian map maker would be if he could have seen that photo and seen the empirical evidence for what he had imagined; and perhaps that is why I am here tonight. To thank you for my name. The name "American". *Tutti gli americani sono italiani nel nome* (All Americans are Italian through their name). Whatever the reason for my being here I am glad. Glad also that I am sure you and I, all of us recognise that in the future no people can find its identity alone. Every people must find its identity in relationship to every other people on the face of this our globe. That vision is from a snapshot, that vision is geographic, that vision is religious, that vision demands a faith that tells us that finally the human family is one, created by one God, redeemed by one Saviour, with one destiny. In order to live out that discipline, that vision rather, there needs to be a certain discipline of life, a way of life that tells us how to be free together, how to tell the truth to one another and how to love one another, our earth and our God. – God bless you. –

The Honourable Helen Shardey MP

His Excellency the Honourable Sir James Gobbo and Lady Gobbo; Your Eminence, Francis Cardinal George, Archbishop of Chicago; the Honourable Steve Bracks, Premier of Victoria; Your Excellency, Archbishop Francesco Canalini, Apostolic Nuncio of the Holy See to Australia; Mr Rino Grollo, Chairman of the Italian Australian Institute; Dr Gianni Bardini, the Consul General of Italy; Opposition Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs in Victoria, the Honourable Carlo Furletti, who is also the first Italian Liberal State Member of Parliament; my other parliamentary colleague Phil Barresi, who is also the first Italian-born Federal Coalition Member of Parliament; my other Parliamentary colleagues, distinguished guests, signore and signori: Buona sera.

I am very pleased and, indeed, very honoured to be here tonight as the Shadow Minister for Multicultural Affairs, representing the Leader of the Opposition, Dr Denis Naphthine, at this the Italian Australian Institute's inaugural conference dinner. Unfortunately Denis Naphthine could not be here with us tonight. But he has asked me to send his very warmest wishes for a successful conference and for a wonderful dinner, which I know we are all enjoying.

I would firstly like to congratulate the Italian Australian Institute on organising this conference which has enabled Victoria's Italian community not only to promote its rich culture and traditions, but also to give us the opportunity to recognise the significance and the achievements of Victoria's Italian community.

The Italian Australian Institute, under the chairmanship of Rino Grollo, was launched by the previous Premier, Jeff Kennett, during a visit to Australia of the former President of the Italian Republic, Oscar Luigi Scalfaro. Since then the Institute has well and truly got off the ground in a magnificent way, mainly through the organisation of this conference, but also through its other ongoing initiatives which promote Italian language and Italian culture. Among these, the publication of the quarterly magazine *Italy Down Under*, which I must say is thoroughly impressive. And my Italian-speaking staffer grabs the copy every time it comes to our office.

The Institute's involvement, along with the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry together with the Italian Consulate, in

sponsoring the trade and business exhibition “Bella Italia”, featuring goods from the regions of Umbria and Le Marche, is to be commended. I am very much looking forward to attending that exhibition next Monday.

Over the past few days a number of experts from both Australia and abroad have presented papers at the conference. And this has included presentations from a number of distinguished people from religious, political, academic, commercial and cultural spheres who understand and appreciate the contribution Italian Australians have made to our multicultural society.

I am very pleased that my Parliamentary Secretary, Carlo Furletti who is an Italian Australian was invited to chair a conference session this morning.

Australia is indeed fortunate that over a quarter of a million people migrated from Italy to Australia in the post-war period building on the strong, already well established pre-war Italian community here.

Victoria has traditionally, as we know, been the most popular destination for Italians. Today Melbourne is the home of the largest Italian community in Australia.

Indeed the first numerically significant group of migrants from Italian background arrived during the gold rush period. I am told that some 2000 Swiss Italians, from the Ticino, complete with pasta factory, began to settle here, in the goldfields of Daylesford, Victoria. In fact, Victoria prides itself on the fact that we are home to people from very many diverse backgrounds; in fact, from all over the world. Over the years our state has become one the most culturally diverse societies with over 150 cultural and linguistic groups.

In recent years our multicultural and multilingual character has added to our ability to break through global markets. This is because as a society we have the diverse skills and knowledge required to participate effectively on the global economic and political scene. In line with this global outlook, the Liberal and National Parties in government maintained a focus on establishing a stronger relationship with Italy. Indeed Victoria has succeeded in forging new and innovative trade and investment links with Italy. Currently, Italy is Australia’s second largest export market after the United Kingdom, with exports worth \$1.7 billion to Italy, and imports from Italy of \$2.8 billion.

This relationship is strengthened by a strong and vibrant Italian community living here in Victoria. The Italian community has indeed made a significant contribution to the social, economic and cultural framework not only of this state, but of our nation Australia.

As the Shadow Minister for Aged Care and Multicultural Affairs, I'm acutely aware that almost a quarter of the aged in Australia are now of non-English speaking background. It is therefore imperative that the overall planning for aged services reflect the needs of the culturally diverse society in which we live. I also understand just how important it is that aged care planners recognise the Italian community's ageing population.

Indeed I was very privileged recently to visit the Assisi Centre in Rosanna and witness first hand the extraordinary work being carried out for the Italian aged at that facility.

Ladies and gentlemen, events such as this tonight are an important means of bringing together members of our community and offering them the opportunity not only to celebrate their cultural heritage but to acknowledge their significant contribution and achievements.

On behalf of the State Opposition I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Victoria's Italian community not only on its dedication to multiculturalism, but to acknowledge the important contribution it has made to our way of life in Victoria.

I wish you all a bella serata. Thank you.

