2026 / Vol.2 / No.01

# La Partenza: Voyage to a New Beginning

## The Journal of the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc.



Published in Australia by
Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc
PO Box 505
Woodville SA 5011
E-mail **ihssa@outlook.com.au**

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Published 2026

Cover designed by La Panna D'Oro
Typesetting and Graphics by Jenny Geracitano
Book designed by Artcol Media
Printed in Australia by Retail ink

# ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

# JOURNAL

January – December 2026

Volume 2

The Editorial Committee for this edition was:

**Laura DiMartino-Kempt, Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano, Mario Russo, Associate Professor Angela Scarino, Rosemarie Geracitano.**

The Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc. (IHSSA) is dedicated to preserving, documenting, and promoting the rich history and cultural heritage of Italian migration and settlement in South Australia. Through this Journal, the Society provides a forum for the sharing of research, personal histories, news, reports, and reflections that contribute to a deeper understanding of the Italian Australian experience.

We encourage members, researchers, and community contributors to submit articles, memoirs, family histories, photographs, and stories that capture the experiences, achievements, and contributions of Italian migrants and their descendants. By recording and sharing these narratives, we help ensure that future generations can appreciate and learn from the journeys of those who helped shape our community.

The views expressed in this Journal are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the IHSSA. Unless otherwise indicated, photographs and illustrations have been supplied by contributors or sourced from the Society's archival collections.

Published annually, the IHSSA Journal forms part of the Society's commitment to preserving and promoting Italian Australian history. Membership subscriptions are $60.00 per annum and include membership of the Society, the Annual Report, and the Society's flagship publication, *La Partenza*.

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# La Partenza: Voyage to a New Beginning Vol 2

## The Journal of the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc.

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# Editorial

## *La Partenza: Voyage to a New Beginning, Volume II*

There are journeys that change a life, and there are journeys that change generations.

The stories contained within this second volume of *La Partenza: Voyage to a New Beginning* remind us that migration is far more than a movement from one country to another. It is an act of courage. It is a leap of faith. It is a promise made by one generation in the hope that the next will enjoy opportunities beyond imagination.

From the mountains of Calabria, the villages of Campania, the farms of Italy, and even the turbulent regions of post-war Europe, the men and women whose stories fill these pages embarked on journeys that would eventually become part of the history of South Australia. Their experiences collectively tell the story sacrifice, perseverance, family loyalty, strength, imagination, and an unwavering belief in a better future.

This volume presents a remarkable collection of lives that span sport, law, politics, education, dentistry, business, community service, agriculture, and social advocacy. Although their paths were different, they share common themes: hard work, resilience, creativity, and a determination to contribute to the society that welcomed them.

We meet pioneering figures such as Cosimo Cutri, whose journey from *Sant'Eufemia D'Aspromonte* to becoming the first person of Italian background to drive harness racing horses in Australia stands as a testament to ambition and perseverance. His story reflects not only sporting achievement but also the broader integration of Italian migrants into mainstream Australian life.

We follow the extraordinary life of Dr Tony Ielasi, who became the first Italo-Australian graduate in Dentistry in South Australia. His story highlights the transformative power of education and the aspirations migrant families held for their children. Through scholarship, professional excellence, and community service, he demonstrated how the dreams of immigrant parents could flourish in the next generation.

The stories from Basket Range reveal another crucial chapter of Italian settlement. Through the experiences of the Musolino and Giorgio families, we gain insight into the pioneering agricultural communities that helped shape the Adelaide Hills. Their labour transformed rugged land into productive orchards and market gardens, while building enduring family and community networks that remain vibrant today.

Grace Cocci's deeply personal account reminds us of the emotional realities that often-accompanied migration: long separations, uncertain futures, adaptation to a new culture, and the challenge of preserving heritage while embracing a new homeland. Her story captures the experiences of countless migrant families whose sacrifices created opportunities for future generations.

This volume also celebrates individuals whose achievements reached the highest levels of public life. Judge Pasquale Tiberio Pirone's remarkable journey from a small Italian village to becoming South Australia's first Italian-born District Court Judge reflects the vital role migrants have played in shaping Australia's legal and civic institutions. His story is one of education, determination, compassion, and public service.

Likewise, the stories of The Hon. Mario Feleppa OAM and The Hon. Carmel Zollo demonstrate the growing political participation and leadership of Italian Australians. Through their service in Parliament and their advocacy on behalf of migrants, they helped ensure that future generations would enjoy greater representation, understanding, and opportunity.

Not all contributions are measured by titles or public office. Maria Russo's lifelong commitment to community activism reminds us that social change is often achieved by ordinary people who refuse to remain silent in the face of injustice. Her tireless advocacy and volunteer work embody the spirit of community service that has characterised so many migrant lives.

Similarly, the story of Paolo Battistella highlights the entrepreneurial energy that migrants brought to Australia. From arriving as a displaced child after World War II to building one of South Australia's leading dry-cleaning enterprises, his journey reflects the innovation, determination, and family values that underpin many successful migrant businesses.

Collectively, these stories bear witness to the enduring legacy of Italian migrants and their descendants in South Australia. They built businesses, cultivated the land, raised families, served their communities, excelled in their professions, entered public life, and helped shape the social, cultural, economic, and political fabric of the State.

Importantly, this volume serves a larger purpose. As members of the post-war migrant generation advance in years, the task of preserving their memories becomes increasingly urgent. Every story recorded is a piece of history saved. Every recollection helps future generations understand not only where they came from, but also the sacrifices, resilience, and determination that made their opportunities possible.

The Italian Historical Society of South Australia deserves recognition for its commitment to preserving these voices. Through oral histories, interviews, and community engagement, the Society ensures that these invaluable stories are not lost to time but preserved for future generations.

As the saying reminds us, whenever a loved one passes away, a whole library is lost unless their stories are captured and shared. This volume is a testament to the importance of preserving those libraries of memory before they disappear forever.

As you read the pages that follow, you will encounter stories of hardship and success, separation and reunion, faith and perseverance. Above all, you will discover stories of people who crossed oceans with hope in their hearts, determination in their spirit, and aspirations for a better future.

Their voyage marked a departure from one world; their courage, sacrifice, and resilience helped shape another.

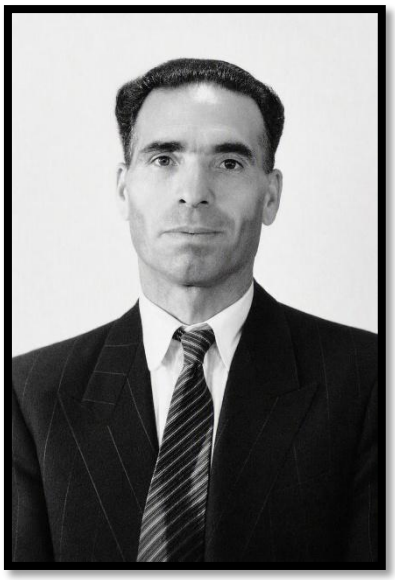
It is with great pride that we present *La Partenza: Voyage to a New Beginning, Volume II* and honour the extraordinary individuals whose journeys continue to inspire us all.

**Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano**
President
Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc.

# Grace Cocci: From Sinopoli to South Australia, A Journey of Family, Sacrifice, Glasshouses and Legacy

## Introduction

The story of Italian migration to Australia is one of courage, sacrifice, resilience, and hope. Throughout the twentieth century, thousands of Italians left their villages and towns in search of opportunities that seemed unattainable in post-war Italy. Among them was Francesco Antonio Alvaro of Sinopoli, Calabria, whose decision to migrate to South Australia would influence not only his own future but also that of his children, grandchildren, and generations to come. Through the memories of his daughter, Grace Cocci, we gain a deeply personal insight into the migrant experience and the enduring importance of family, culture, faith, and community.



While this is Grace's story, it is also inseparable from the journey of her father. His path from the mountains of Calabria to the suburbs and agricultural districts of South Australia created opportunities that would shape the lives of his descendants. It is a story of perseverance and adaptation, of maintaining cultural traditions while embracing a new country, and of building a sense of belonging far from one's birthplace, without losing connection to ancestral roots.

## Roots in Sinopoli

Grace Cocci was born in Sinopoli, Calabria, a close-knit community where family, faith, and agriculture shaped daily life. Both of her parents were born there, and generations of the Alvaro family earned their livelihood from the land. Grace's father, Francesco Antonio Alvaro, was raised alongside three brothers and a sister in a farming household where hard work was an essential part of everyday life. Like many families throughout southern Italy, they faced limited economic opportunities and persistent financial hardship. Although Sinopoli provided a strong sense of belonging and tradition, it offered little prospect of economic advancement.

The family's connection with Australia began through Francesco's sister, who migrated with her husband. Once established, she assisted her brothers by providing sponsorship and support, opening a pathway that would eventually change the direction of the family's future. For Francesco, migration was not driven by adventure or curiosity but by the practical need to secure employment and improve his prospects. Australia offered opportunities that were unavailable in Calabria at the time.

Despite leaving Italy, Francesco never lost his attachment to Sinopoli. He returned to his hometown to marry Giuseppina Maria Carbone and begin a family. When their children Paul

and Mimma were born, financial circumstances once again led him back to Australia. Like many migrant fathers of his generation, he endured lengthy periods of separation from his wife and children, believing that temporary sacrifice would create long-term opportunities for those he loved.

**War, Separation and Uncertainty**

The war years brought some of the greatest challenges the family would experience. Communication between Italy and Australia became difficult and unreliable, leaving relatives with little information about Francesco's circumstances. Grace recalled that there were times when family members in Italy genuinely did not know whether he was alive. Such uncertainty placed enormous emotional strain on those left behind and reflects the hardship endured by many migrant families whose lives were disrupted by war and distance.

Following the war, Francesco returned briefly to Sinopoli. It was during this period that Grace was born. However, the conditions that had originally encouraged migration remained largely unchanged. Economic opportunities in post-war Italy were limited, while Australia continued to offer greater prospects for employment and stability. Francesco remained convinced that his family's future lay there.

Initially, Grace's mother, Giuseppina Maria Carbone, was reluctant to leave Italy. She remained in Sinopoli with the children while Francesco and his eldest son, Paul, returned to Australia. Over time, however, the emotional burden of separation became increasingly difficult. Being apart from her husband and son eventually persuaded her to make the journey herself. When Grace was only one year old, the family boarded a ship bound for Australia and began a forty-day voyage that would permanently alter the course of their lives.

Grace often recalled her mother's stories about the journey. The voyage was long, uncomfortable, and marked by extreme heat, yet it represented far more than a physical journey between countries. It was the beginning of a new chapter for the family. While Francesco rarely spoke about his migration experiences, Giuseppina frequently shared memories of the voyage and the courage required to leave behind family, familiarity, and homeland in pursuit of a better future.

**A New Beginning in South Australia**

Upon arriving in Adelaide, the family initially stayed with Francesco's sister, whose earlier migration had made their own journey possible. Although grateful for her support, Grace's mother was keen to establish an independent household. Before long, the family rented a home in Lockleys and later built their own residence on Malcolm Street, in Flinders Park. Later in 1955, Francesco purchased five acres of land on Tapleys Hill Road, where he developed a family property and constructed another home.



It was there that Grace spent her childhood and teenage years, remaining in the family home until her marriage. For many migrant families, home ownership represented far more than financial security. It symbolised permanence, achievement, and the successful outcome of years of sacrifice and hard work.



Grace remembered the affection her mother held for their home. The olive trees reminded her of Calabria, while the church situated nearby provided comfort and reinforced the family's religious life. Together, these elements helped create a familiar environment in which Italian customs and traditions could continue to flourish despite the distance from their homeland.

Francesco adapted quickly to life in Australia. Unlike some migrants who experienced ongoing difficulty with language and cultural adjustment, he embraced the opportunities available in his new country. Grace often commented that her father came to prefer Australia because of its possibilities, quality of life, and opportunities for advancement. He learned English, integrated into Australian society, and worked consistently to provide security and stability for his family.

**From Calabrian Farmer to South Australian Glasshouse Grower**

Work shaped much of Francesco's life. During his early years in Australia, he undertook physically demanding labour in remote areas of South Australia. Grace remembers stories of her father participating in scrub-clearing operations along the west coast under difficult conditions. Workers often improvised with limited resources, cooking meals on sheets of tin because proper equipment was unavailable. Such experiences reflected the determination shared by many first-generation Italian migrants who accepted hardship in pursuit of long-term security for their families.



Francesco later secured employment at Michell's, where he remained for many years. The stability provided by this work enabled him to support his family, purchase land, and establish a permanent home. Yet despite adapting successfully to Australian life and employment, his connection to the land never diminished. Farming had been central to his upbringing in Sinopoli, and the skills he learned there remained with him throughout his life.

Following his retirement from Michell's, Francesco became involved in the glasshouse industry. This was not merely a new occupation but a continuation of a lifelong relationship with agriculture. The practical knowledge acquired in Calabria found renewed purpose in South Australia, where many Italian migrants made significant contributions to the state's

horticultural development. Through glasshouse cultivation, Francesco combined the experience of his youth with the opportunities available in his adopted country.

The work demanded patience, discipline, and constant attention to crops. These qualities had characterised Francesco throughout his life and were reflected in his success both as a worker and as a grower. The progression from a young farmer in Calabria to a respected member of South Australia's agricultural community remains a source of great pride for Grace and her family.

**Growing Up Between Two Worlds**

Grace remembers her childhood as a happy one, despite the challenges that often-accompanied life in a migrant family. Within the home, daily life remained strongly influenced by Italian traditions. Her mother spoke primarily in Calabrian dialect, making it the language of family life. Traditional cooking, regular church attendance, family visits, religious celebrations, and Sunday gatherings all reinforced the customs that had been brought from Italy.



Outside the family home, Grace encountered a different cultural environment. School provided her first significant exposure to English language and Australian culture and customs. With support from the nuns who taught her, she adapted successfully to her new surroundings. Nevertheless, there were occasional reminders that her experiences differed from those of many classmates.

One memory she recalls clearly relates to school lunches. While many children arrived with sandwiches typical of Australian households, Grace often brought sandwiches filled with *frittata*. The unfamiliar food became a source of amusement among her classmates, who commented on its smell and difference from their own lunches. She also remembers her mother calling loudly for her after school, a practice that stood out at the time and attracted attention from other children. Such experiences were common among the children of migrant families navigating life between two cultures.



Rather than diminishing her sense of identity, however, these experiences strengthened it. Grace remained proud of her Italian heritage and valued the traditions, language, and family connections that formed such an important part of her upbringing. The ability to move comfortably between two cultural worlds became one of the defining features of her life.

**Family Expectations and Personal Achievement**

As the daughter of a traditional Italian family, Grace was expected to contribute actively to household life. Her responsibilities included cooking, cleaning, and caring for family members. She did not continue her schooling to high school because her family expected her to remain at home and assist with domestic responsibilities. Looking back, she accepted these expectations as part of the values and circumstances that shaped many migrant households of the period. Family needs were often placed ahead of individual aspirations, reflecting a strong commitment to collective wellbeing.

Despite these limitations, Grace developed skills and interests that brought her great satisfaction. After her brother Paul married, she enrolled at TAFE to study dressmaking. The training she received enabled her to create her own clothing, and she famously never purchased a dress until the day of her wedding. Between her household duties, she devoted countless hours to sewing, developing practical skills, while expressing her creativity and independence.



In 1970, Grace married Dominic Cocci, marking the beginning of another important stage of her life. Following their marriage, they settled in Virginia, South Australia, where they established their family home. Together they raised two children, Margaret and Lewis, and later welcomed the arrival of grandchildren Claire and Olivia. Family remains one of Grace's greatest sources of pride and fulfilment, reflecting the values of love, unity, responsibility, and continuity that were central to her upbringing.

Her experiences illustrate the resourcefulness displayed by many migrant women of her generation. Although opportunities were often shaped by family expectations and cultural traditions, she found meaningful ways to develop her talents while contributing to family life and maintaining a strong sense of personal achievement.

**The Influence of Francesco Antonio Alvaro**

Throughout Grace's recollections, her father emerges as a steady and influential presence. She remembers him as hardworking, respectful, and deeply committed to the wellbeing of his family. Because much of his older children's early lives had been spent working away from home, he devoted considerable attention to Grace during her childhood, creating a particularly close bond between father and daughter.

Francesco rarely spoke about his accomplishments or the difficulties he had faced. Instead, he communicated his values through daily actions. His life demonstrated the importance of perseverance, personal responsibility, and gratitude. Among the lessons he sought most

strongly to pass on to his children was the value of respect, a principle that remained central to his character throughout his life.

One of Grace's most cherished memories captures the simplicity of her father's nature. Each afternoon, at around four o'clock after returning from work, he would sit quietly in the driveway and watch people making their way home. There was nothing dramatic about the scene, yet it remains deeply meaningful to Grace. In many ways, it symbolised a man who had spent decades working, sacrificing, and planning for the future before finally enjoying the satisfaction of seeing his family established and secure.

**Returning to Sinopoli**

In 2000, Grace and her husband, Dominic, travelled to Sinopoli. The visit proved to be one of the most emotional experiences of her life. On entering her grandmother's home, she immediately felt a profound sense of connection to the place where her family's story began. Although Australia had been home for almost her entire life, the experience reinforced her bond with the town of her birth and the generations of relatives who had lived there before her.

Meeting cousins, uncles, and other family members who had remained in Italy provided valuable insight into her family's history and strengthened her understanding of her heritage. The visit also deepened her appreciation of the choices made by her father. While she admired the beauty of Sinopoli and valued her connection to it, she recognised the opportunities that Australia had offered her family and understood why Francesco had chosen to build his future there.

The journey reinforced a dual sense of belonging that has characterised much of Grace's life. Australia is the country in which she raised her family and built her future, while Sinopoli remains an enduring source of identity, memory, and cultural connection. Together, both places continue to shape her understanding of who she is and where her family's story began.

**Community, Culture and the Preservation of Heritage**

Although Grace's parents were not heavily involved in formal Italian organisations during her childhood, the Italian community nevertheless played a significant role in family life. Like many migrant families who settled in South Australia after the war, their sense of community was built through family friendships, church connections, neighbours, and fellow migrants from Calabria. These relationships provided practical support, companionship, and familiarity while helping newcomers adapt to life in a new country.



Some of Grace's earliest memories are of gatherings that brought Italian families together. Weddings, christenings, religious celebrations, and family occasions created opportunities to maintain traditions and strengthen community ties. These events were characterised by abundant food, music, conversation, and a shared understanding of cultural customs. For children such as Grace, they offered an environment in

which language, heritage, and identity remained a natural part of everyday life.

The Catholic Church occupied a central position within the family's life. Living beside the church in Flinders Park meant that faith formed part of daily routine and community engagement. Beyond worship, the church provided friendship, guidance, education, and a sense of belonging. Through the support of the nuns who helped her learn English and adjust to Australian society, Grace developed values of respect, service, compassion, and responsibility that have remained important throughout her life.

After marrying Dominic Cocci in 1970 and settling in Virginia, South Australia, Grace continued to uphold the traditions she inherited from her parents. Together they raised their children, Margaret and Lewis, while maintaining a strong connection to family, faith, and cultural identity. Over time, Grace developed a deep appreciation for the importance of ensuring that these traditions were passed on to younger generations.



Since moving to Virginia, Grace has remained actively involved in her local Catholic parish and in devotional traditions that have long united Calabrian families. Among the most significant has been her participation in the annual celebrations honouring Maria Santissima di Crochi. These celebrations continue to bring together faith, culture, and community while creating meaningful connections between older migrants and younger generations born in Australia.

Grace has also contributed to preserving the traditions of Sinopoli through her work as a committee member of the Associazione Sinopolese Del S.A. Maria SS Di Tutte Le Grazie, Adelaide. Through this role, she assists with activities that promote the history, religious customs, and cultural heritage of the Sinopolese community. Her involvement reflects a continuing commitment to the traditions brought to South Australia by migrants such as her father and to ensuring their relevance for future generations.



Beyond these formal responsibilities, Grace remains an active participant in Italian cultural life across South Australia. Community celebrations, religious functions, dinner dances, social gatherings, and cultural festivals provide opportunities to strengthen connections within the broader Italian Australian community while celebrating a shared heritage. Through her participation, she has become a respected member of a community that values both its history and its place within multicultural Australia.

One of Grace's most significant contributions has been within her own family. Every Sunday, relatives gather around the table for a traditional family lunch, continuing a custom established

during her childhood. These gatherings provide an opportunity to strengthen family bonds, share stories, and pass cultural knowledge from one generation to the next. The Sunday lunch table remains a place where family history is remembered and where younger family members develop a deeper understanding of their heritage.

Food also plays an important role in preserving family traditions. Having learned traditional Calabrian recipes from her mother, Giuseppina Maria Carbone, Grace now shares this knowledge with her children and grandchildren. Her granddaughters, Claire and Olivia, often join her in the kitchen, learning recipes that have been handed down through generations. In doing so, they inherit not only culinary skills but also the stories, memories, and cultural experiences associated with those traditions.

Grace also understands the value of storytelling as a means of preserving history. By sharing memories of her parents, their migration journey, and the experiences of migrant families adapting to life in Australia, she helps ensure that the sacrifices of the first generation are not forgotten. Her participation in oral history projects contributes to a broader understanding of South Australia's Italian migrant experience and preserves valuable historical knowledge for future generations.

This commitment to preserving family history was reflected in the public recognition of her father, Francesco Antonio Alvaro, whose migration story featured in a photographic exhibition organised by the Federazione dei Calabresi del Sud Australia in 2016. The exhibition highlighted his journey aboard the *Regina d'Italia* and recognised his contribution to the Calabrian community in South Australia. For Grace, this acknowledgement reinforced the importance of preserving individual migrant stories as part of the wider history of migration and settlement.

Today, Grace serves as an important link between generations. Born in Italy and raised in Australia, she understands both the experiences of the migrant generation and those of younger Italian Australians growing up within a multicultural society. Through her family traditions, community involvement, church activities, and commitment to sharing cultural knowledge, she demonstrates how heritage can be preserved, adapted, and passed on without losing its essential character.

For Grace, preserving heritage is not simply about remembering the past. It is about recognising the sacrifices that created opportunities for future generations and ensuring that those stories continue to be understood and valued. Through her work with the Associazione Sinopolese, her participation in religious celebrations, her involvement in community events, her teaching of traditional recipes, and her willingness to record family memories, she continues the journey that began when her father left Sinopoli in search of a better future. Through these efforts, the values, traditions, and experiences carried to Australia by Francesco Antonio Alvaro remain a living part of both family and community life in South Australia.



**Conclusion**

The story of Grace Cocci is ultimately a story of family, migration, and continuity across generations. Beginning in the farming community of Sinopoli, passing through years of separation and adjustment, and culminating in the establishment of a successful life in South Australia, it reflects the experiences shared by many Italian migrant families. At the centre of that story stands Francesco Antonio Alvaro, whose determination, resilience, and commitment to his family created opportunities that would benefit generations to come.

From the fields of Calabria to the glasshouses and communities of South Australia, Francesco carried with him values of hard work, respect, faith, and family responsibility. Those values were inherited by Grace, who has continued to honour them through her family life, community service, cultural involvement, and commitment to preserving her heritage. Through family gatherings, traditional cooking, religious participation, and the sharing of personal histories, she has ensured that the experiences of the migrant generation remain an enduring part of family memory and community identity.



Her story reminds us that migration is more than a journey between countries. It is the creation of opportunity, belonging, and legacy. The decision of one young Calabrian farmer to travel to Australia transformed the lives of his descendants while contributing to the development of the wider South Australian community. In doing so, Francesco Antonio Alvaro and Grace Cocci became part of the enduring story of Italian migration to Australia, a story defined by courage, perseverance, community, and the lasting strength of family.

Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano

# Cosimo Cutri: From Calabria to the Harness Racing Tracks of Australia

## Introduction

Cosimo Cutri occupies a unique place in both Australian migration history and the history of harness racing. Born in wartime Italy and arriving in Australia as a young migrant in 1955, he became recognised as the first person of Italian background to drive harness racing horses in Australia and New Zealand. His journey from a small mountain town in Calabria to the racetracks of South Australia reflects the determination, resilience and ambition of a generation of post-war Italian migrants who helped transform Australia while remaining deeply connected to their heritage.



More than a sporting pioneer, Cutri became a symbol of opportunity, integration and achievement for Italian Australians. His life story illustrates how migrants overcame language barriers, cultural differences and economic hardship to build successful lives in their adopted homeland. Through his achievements, he earned respect within the racing industry and pride within the Italian community.

## Family Background and Early Life in Calabria

Cosimo Cutri was born on 9 June 1940 in the small mountain town of Sant'Eufemia D'Aspromonte in the province of Reggio Calabria, southern Italy. Reflecting on his origins many decades later, he proudly stated: 'Born in Italy, in the little town *Sant' Eufemia D'Aspromonte, Provincia Reggio Calabria.*'

He was born during the early years of the Second World War, a period of uncertainty and hardship for many Italian families. Sant'Eufemia D'Aspromonte was a close-knit rural community in the rugged Aspromonte mountains where life revolved around family, religion, agriculture and hard work. Most families depended on farming, livestock, forestry and manual labour for their livelihood.



**Damiano Cutri (Father) & Francesca Rosaria Luppino (Mother)**

Cutri's father served during the Second World War and later worked in the forestry industry. Following the war, he supervised timber-cutting operations in the mountain forests surrounding the region, while also working

family land. Like many Calabrian families, the Cutris relied on multiple forms of employment to support themselves.

His childhood reflected the strong sense of community typical of southern Italy. Much of his time was spent outdoors with friends, playing soccer and exploring the town. 'I remember a lot of my little friends ... playing soccer and running around, up and down.' The friendships formed during those years remained important throughout his life. When he returned to Italy decades later, he was amazed that many of the friends from his childhood were still there.

Religion occupied a central place in his upbringing. Because the family lived next door to the church, it became almost a second home. 'We used to go there every day.' As an altar boy, he regularly served Mass. 'I used to be an Italian *chierichetto* ... serving the Mass in the morning.' The Catholic Church was not simply a religious institution but the centre of community life. Religious festivals, feast days, and church gatherings helped maintain the strong social bonds that characterised Calabrian society.



Cosimo & Tina with their Cousin and mum Francesca Lupino

Family relationships were equally important. In southern Italy, cousins were often regarded as brothers and sisters. 'Italy is different ... your close cousins are like a brother.' One cousin of almost identical age grew up alongside him, and their relationship remained close throughout their lives. These bonds help explain why leaving Italy proved so emotionally difficult.

As he entered adolescence, Cutri developed an interest in music. 'I started learning music. piano accordion.' Music was an important part of Calabrian social life and provided him with an enjoyable creative outlet. However, migration would soon interrupt this passion.

By the early 1950s, his father had already migrated to Australia, seeking greater opportunities. He remained in Italy with his mother and sister while arrangements were made for reunification. During these years he continued school, music lessons, church activities, and village life, unaware that his future would soon take a dramatically different direction.

When the opportunity arrived in 1955 to join his father in Australia, he was forced to abandon many aspects of the life he loved. 'I got to give up play the piano accordion because we live in Australia.' The values formed during his Calabrian childhood, family loyalty, hard work, faith and community spirit, would continue to shape him throughout his life in Australia.



Cosimo and Tina Dichiera (sister) growing up together

**Migration and the Voyage to Australia**

Like many southern Italian families after the Second World War, the Cutri family was transformed by migration. Cosimo

Cutri's father left Italy around 1950 as part of the growing wave of Italians seeking opportunities in Australia. Positive reports from migrants encouraged the rest of the family to follow.

Despite the promise of a better future, leaving Italy was deeply emotional. One source of excitement was the prospect of reuniting with childhood friends who had already migrated. 'The first thing I thought, Bruno. I'm gonna meet Bruno when I go to Australia.' On 22 October 1955, fifteen-year-old Cutri boarded the migrant ship *Neptunia* with his mother and sister. Carrying his treasured accordion, he began the long journey to Australia. The departure remains one of his most vivid memories. 'When the ship started moving out ... there was a broken heart, you know. Like auntie, uncle, cousin, everybody, friend. You can imagine the way you feel.'

The voyage lasted approximately twenty-eight days and included stops at Port Said, Aden, Singapore and Fremantle before reaching Melbourne. At Fremantle, friends recognised him from the dock and threw gifts onto the ship, reminding migrants that support networks already existed in Australia. The family arrived in Melbourne on 18 November 1955 and immediately travelled by train to Adelaide, arriving the following morning.



Cosimo with all his friends after a concert

**First Impressions of Adelaide**

Adelaide immediately struck Cutri as completely different from Calabria. 'The first thing hit me, the smell.' The smoke from factories, industrial chimneys and large buildings were unlike anything he had previously encountered. Yet he was warmly welcomed by relatives who had already settled in South Australia. Family members organised food, a gathering, and celebration, easing the shock of arrival. Like many migrants, the Cutris relied heavily on family networks during their earliest years in Australia.

The following day, reality arrived quickly. Instead of beginning school, he accompanied his father to work. Years later he reflected: 'I'm not very good at English because I never went to school.' Although he regretted missing formal schooling, he adapted quickly and embraced the responsibilities expected of migrant families.



**Work and Adaptation to Australia**

Like many newly arrived migrants, Cutri initially worked with fellow Italians. While this eased the transition, it slowed his learning of English. 'Not too good,' he admitted when describing his early English skills.

His parents later established a grocery and delicatessen on the corner of Kingborn Avenue and Grange Road, Seaton, one of the area's earliest Italian-owned businesses. The shop served both Italian and Australian customers and became a community meeting place. Cutri helped in the business while pursuing his growing interest in horses.

The story of the family shop mirrored a broader pattern among Italian migrants who established small businesses throughout Adelaide and across Australia, contributing significantly to community development and economic growth.



Cosimo with long time friend Aurelio

**Discovering a Passion for Horses**

The defining passion of Cutri's life emerged soon after his arrival in Australia. Travelling to work each morning with his father, he passed Cheltenham Racecourse and watched horses being exercised. ‘Every morning we go to work, used to see the horses ... and by God, I tell you what, it come in my blood straight away.’ Their beauty and power made an immediate impression. ‘I look at that. I said, I love that.’

Initially, he entered thoroughbred racing as an apprentice jockey. Weighing only thirty-seven kilograms, he was ideally suited to riding and won on his first ride. However, he soon realised that his future lay in harness racing rather than thoroughbreds.

**Reg Robinson: Mentor, Teacher and Friend**

The most important figure in Cutri's racing career was trainer Reg Robinson. Through family friend Pasquale Adami, Cutri was introduced to Robinson, who operated a successful trotting stable and private training track. Robinson immediately recognised the young migrant's enthusiasm and offered him an opportunity. Their relationship became much more than employer and employee. ‘I started work with him. Work[ing] with him for a long, long, long ... till Mr Robinson died.’



"Sage King" Reinsman Cosimo Cutri 1957

At Robinson's stable, Cutri learned every aspect of harness racing. He groomed horses, cleaned stables, jogged horses, prepared them for races and eventually developed into both a trainer and driver. The stable also provided his practical education in English. ‘Whatever I pick up, I pick up through this family there, Mr Robinson’s family.’ Robinson's son, Rex, a leading harness driver and Inter Dominion competitor, also became an important influence.

The trust Robinson placed in Cutri became evident when he allocated him a drive on *Sage King*, a horse partly owned by Cosimo Cutri’s father. The result was memorable: ‘First drive, first winner.’ On 26 December 1957, Cosimo Cutri recorded his first harness racing victory. It marked the beginning of an extraordinary career.

**Becoming Australia's First Italian Harness Driver**



"Mighty Norwood" Reinsman Cosimo Cutri 1963

Over the following decades, Cutri became a respected driver and trainer. Most significantly, he became recognised as the first person of Italian background to drive harness racing horses in Australia and New Zealand. Asked about the distinction, he proudly said: 'I was the first one. First Italian driver in Australia and New Zealand.' This achievement was one of the accomplishments of which he remained most proud. It represented not only personal success but a milestone for the Italian community.

At a time when most Italians were associated with factories, construction sites, and small businesses, Cutri demonstrated that migrants could also achieve success in mainstream Australian sport. Italian Australians followed his career passionately. 'Let's go to [the] trots. Italian boy driving tonight.'

One of the highlights of his career occurred when he had the opportunity to parade and handle the legendary champion *Cardigan Bay* during an Inter Dominion series in Adelaide. 'You think I was a king.' For a migrant teenager who had arrived unable to speak English, it was an unforgettable moment.


"Moneta Girl" Trainer & Reinsman Cosimo Cutri 1970

**Impact on the Italian Community in Australia**

Cosimo Cutri's achievements extended far beyond individual sporting success. When he arrived in Australia in 1955, Italians were still establishing themselves in Australian society. Many worked in physically demanding occupations and often experienced social prejudice. Public recognition of Italian achievement was relatively uncommon. Within this environment, Cutri's success took on broader significance. Harness racing was a respected Australian sport largely dominated by Australians of Anglo-Celtic background. His achievements demonstrated that migrants could successfully enter and excel within mainstream Australian institutions.


"Ray Adios"

Many Italian migrants regarded him as a representative of their community. His victories became collective victories. Every newspaper report, radio mention and race win presented Italians in a positive light and challenged stereotypes. His achievement as the first Italian harness driver in Australia and New Zealand carried special symbolic importance. It represented a breakthrough for the Italian community and demonstrated that migrants could be pioneers rather than simply participants.




Harness racing also became a pathway toward integration. 'Soon I started horses, I mixed with Australian people.' Through racing, he developed friendships with Australians from diverse backgrounds, including police officers, trainers, sporting personalities and Aboriginal horsemen. His experience demonstrated how shared interests could overcome cultural and language barriers.

For younger Italian Australians, Cutri's achievements broadened possibilities. He showed that migrants and their children could aspire to success in sport, public life and professions, beyond traditional migrant occupations. He became not only a racing pioneer but also a symbol of acceptance, achievement and belonging.

**Friends, Community and Belonging**



Cosimo with KG - Ken Cunningham

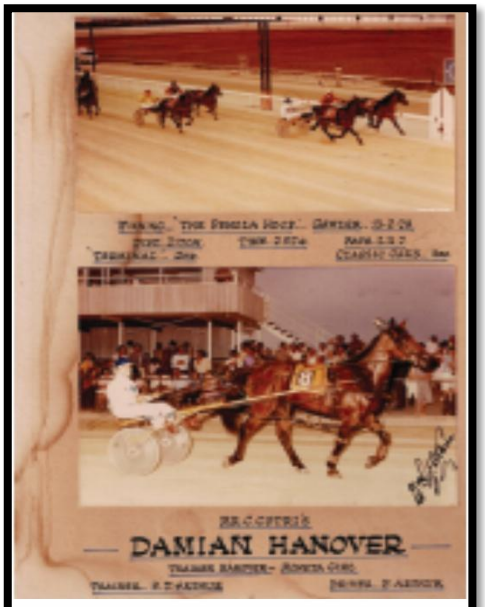
Cutri particularly valued his friendships with Aboriginal horsemen such as Johnny Cadell and Kevin Rankin and always spoke of them with great respect.

His involvement in harness racing brought him into contact with a wide range of prominent South Australians and further expanded the social networks that he had begun building since arriving in Australia. Through his family's grocery business and his standing within the racing community, he met notable figures from sport, politics and the media. Among them were radio personality Tony Pilkington, with whom he maintained a friendship for many years, Australian cricket great Greg Chappell, South Australian Premier Don Dunstan, and respected Australian Rules footballer Lindsey Head. These connections reflected the extent to which harness racing had opened doors beyond the racetrack,

introducing him to people from all walks of Australian society and reinforcing his successful integration into his adopted country. For a young migrant who had arrived from Calabria with little English and few local connections, such relationships demonstrated just how far he had travelled on his Australian journey.

**Retirement from Racing**

After more than two decades in harness racing, Cutri gradually brought his active career to a close. The decision did not arise from a loss of passion. Rather, it resulted from family considerations, injury and changing priorities. Harness racing demanded extraordinary commitment. 'You're busy all day with the horses. You're working in the morning, then you feed him and then you brush him.'



"Damian Hanover" 1979

His days often began before sunrise and continued well into the evening. Caring for, training and preparing horses was a seven-day-a-week responsibility. A serious racing accident at Wayville Trotting Track also contributed to his retirement. 'I had a nasty fall ... five, six horses bang.' The incident left him with significant shoulder injuries and reminded him of the dangers inherent in harness racing. Family concerns became equally important. 'My wife, she said no, no, no ... I don't like [the horses]. and I stopped.' After spending more than twenty years in the industry, he eventually stepped away from competitive racing.

However, retirement did not end his love of the sport. He remained a regular attendee at race meetings, followed racing on television, and maintained friendships within the industry. Horses continued to be an important part of his identity and life.

**Conclusion: A Lasting Legacy**

The life of Cosimo Cutri is a remarkable story of migration, perseverance and achievement. Born in the mountains of Calabria during the Second World War, he left behind family, friends, church, music and village life to begin a new future in Australia. Arriving as a fifteen-year-old migrant with no English, he embraced the opportunities available to him through hard work and determination.

Through the mentorship of Reg Robinson and his own dedication, he transformed a fascination with horses into a pioneering sporting career. He became recognised as the first person of Italian background to drive harness racing horses in Australia and New Zealand, a distinction of which he remained enormously proud.

Among all his accomplishments, perhaps the achievement that gave him the greatest satisfaction was knowing that he had become the first Italian harness racing driver in Australia and New Zealand. It represented more than a personal milestone; it was a breakthrough for the wider Italian community. His success showed that Italian migrants could excel far beyond the factories, market gardens and small businesses traditionally associated with migrant life. In becoming a pioneer, he

earned a lasting place in both Australian harness racing history and the history of Italian settlement in Australia.

His achievements carried significance far beyond the racetrack. Every victory challenged stereotypes, promoted acceptance and demonstrated that Italians could excel in mainstream Australian sport. For many members of the Italian community, he became a source of collective pride and inspiration.

Today, Cosimo Cutri stands as more than a successful harness racing driver. He represents a generation of migrants who crossed oceans in search of opportunity and who, through determination, hard work, and perseverance, enriched Australia's social, cultural and sporting life. His story remains a powerful example of the migrant experience and an important chapter in both Italian Australian history and Australian sporting history.



Cosimo with Geoff Webster after a race



Cosimo with Dick White



Cosimo & Angela on their Wedding Day



Cosimo with Claudio Villa

# Trainers Licence



This TRAINER'S LICENCE is granted to

Cosimo CUTRI,

of 22 Airdrie Ave., SEATON.

to have effect from the date hereof until the 31st day of July next, subject to the Rules of the Trotting Control Board.

When the holder applies for a licence for the following or any subsequent year, this licence must be returned with the new application.

If this licence be lost or destroyed the holder must make a statutory declaration to that effect, and forward such declaration to the Secretary of the Trotting Conrol Board, who will cause a duplicate to be issued.

Every registered trainer is required to be covered by the Accident Insurance Policy arranged through Edward Lumley & Sons (S.A.) Pty. Ltd.

Date 28.7.75

TROTTING CONTROL BOARD

D.J. Southgate Secretary

Leal 65066

This **DRIVER'S LICENCE** is granted to

Cosimo CUTRI,

of 22 Airdrie Ave., SEATON.

Born 9.6.40

by the Trotting Control Board to have effect from the date hereof to the 31st July next, subject to the Rules of the Trotting Control Board.

This licence must be produced, if demanded, at the scale when the holder is weighing out.

Every registered driver is required to be covered by the Accident Insurance Policy arranged through Edward Lumley & Sons (S.A.) Pty. Ltd.

Date 28.7.75

TROTTING CONTROL BOARD

D.J. Southgate Secretary

Leal 65064




Cosimo celebrating his grandson Harrys Communion Confirmation with family

MONDAY 16th NOVEMBER 1970

MONETA Girl's win at Wayville last Friday night was a family affair.

The mare is prepared by one of the sport's most enthusiastic trainer-reinsmen, Cozzi Cutri, for his business-man father, Mr. Don Cutri.

But Cozzi gives a lot of credit for last Friday night's win to his mother.

An excited Cozzi said following Moneta Girl's win that his mother had brought him luck.

Mrs. Cutri, unlike her husband and son, is not overkeen on trotting.

Last Friday was the first time she had attended a meeting.

From Mrs. Cutri's reaction to the win of Moneta Girl, trotting has another convert.

Moneta Girl is raced by Mr. Cutri on lease from his friend, Mr. Fred Pazzalari.

The mare showed outstanding potential as a two and three-year-old, but has been dogged with a "dicky" near foreleg throughout her racing career.

Among her "scalps" during her winning runs as a three-year-old were Lucky Child, now winning in America, and the brilliant mare My Gal Sal.

Moneta Girl, because of her leg trouble, never sees a training track between races.

Her training is restricted to beach work at Semaphore and salt water treatment.

For the sake of the sport I hope the leg stands up to hard racing.

We need pacers of the calibre of Moneta Girl at Wayville.

MONDAY NOVEMBER



★ ★

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MONDAY 16TH NOVEMBER 1970

# Doctor Tony Ielasi

## First Italo-Australian Graduate in Dentistry in South Australia from Adelaide University

Tony Ielasi was born in Adelaide in 1942.

His father was Rosario Vincenzo Ielasi who was born in 1907 in Careri (Calabria) Italy and who had two brothers called Antonino and Francesco and four sisters called Vittoria, Giuseppa, Rosa and Angela. Tony's father was a butcher in the town of Careri, but with the impending Fascist war in Abyssinia (now called Ethiopia) in 1927, he was called up to serve in the army in November 1926, arrived in Abyssinia in April 1927, and was discharged in September 1928 (according to his military papers). Maybe he was embittered by the Abyssinian conflict or, seeing the turbulence of political events in Italy, perhaps he saw war coming and so he decided to emigrate to Australia.

Rosario left Italy in 1938, having been sponsored by his brother Antonino who had migrated to Adelaide as early as 1927 and who by then had a dairy farm in Macclesfield. (Antonino also sponsored his mother Maria and father Antonio, and another relative, Giuseppa).

Rosario worked on the dairy farm until 1940. He then went to Adelaide where he was interned by the Australian Government as an “Alien” and sent to an Internment Camp in Quorn. He broke his foot, under suspicious circumstances, during the internment and was hence sent back to Adelaide in 1941.

Rosario found work on a market garden at Lockleys, which was owned by Antonio Taverna, who also had two sons and a daughter called Maria Grazia. By this time Antonio was fairly well off and owned a Model T Ford automobile, which he used to take the produce (mainly celery and tomatoes) to market in Adelaide. Being a hard worker, Rosario was soon well liked by Antonio. Which was just as well, because Rosario had his eye on Antonio’s daughter, Maria Grazia.

Tony's mother, Maria Grazia Taverna was born in 1921 in Varapodio (Calabria), to a father called Antonio and a mother called Carmela. She worked on the family market garden in Lockleys, where she met Rosario. She also had a brother called Arturo Taverna (who became well known in Adelaide as a hairdresser), and another brother, Antonio Taverna Jr. (who also became a well-known hairdresser in Glenelg and was in competition with another well-known hairdresser, Ferris Trabilsi). There was also a younger brother, Antonino who was killed at the age of 16 years when he was riding his bike in the dark, somewhere in Lockleys.

Romance quickly blossomed between Rosario and Maria Grazia and, in 1941, Rosario married Maria Grazia. He was 34 years old and she was 20 years old. They worked with his father-in-law for a while but rented a house for about six years in River Road (now known as Rowells Road) in Lockleys, which was owned by Mr. Hop Sing. This house had a brick floor, no ceiling, no electricity; the place was lit up by kerosene lamps. There was no running water (the rainwater was collected in a tank for drinking and when needed as hot water, was heated in a kettle on a wood stove). Tony and his sister Maria were born in this house.

In 1944, Rosario and Maria Grazia had enough money to buy a house in Ebor Avenue, Torrensville. Their third child, Vittorio, was born in this house. Rosario had many different jobs after he married, including in the farming implements factory called Bagshaw, the Michele woollen mill and the Metters stove factory, until he bought a mixed delicatessen shop on Henley Beach Road, Torrensville which became the family business. He became an Australian Citizen in 1946, according to his Naturalisation Certificate.


Family Home Ebor Avenue Torrensville

When he was young, Tony worked in the family Delicatessen shop. For added income, he also sold newspapers at street corners and outside the Royal Hotel on Henley Beach Road and did odd jobs, including working in a bicycle shop, selling furniture and collecting scrap metal. (He was so enterprising, that he collected and on-sold the left-over scraps of lead which was used to weld the ends of sewer pipes).

Tony's younger brother, Vittorio, went on to become a Radio and Television technician and his sister, Maria, went on to work as a secretary.

Tony went to school at the Marist Brothers College in Thebarton. This was a technical college, and Tony was destined to become a fitter and turner. However, one of his teachers could see Tony was intelligent and a quick learner, and suggested that he transfer to Sacred Heart College, which he did, in 1958, as a border student. Here he successfully completed his Leaving Certificate and then he proceeded to gain his Leaving Honours Certificate (in 1960) to be able to go to university.

While at boarding school, Tony corresponded (with letters written in Italian) with his first cousin, Giuseppe Linarello, the son of Vittoria, his father's sister. Giuseppe was the editor of “La Fiamma” newspaper. He thus helped Tony to master the Italian language. Giuseppe also assisted many migrants to settle in South Australia, and for this, he was made a Cavaliere (or knighted) by the Italian Government.

Tony entered Adelaide University in 1961, enrolling in Dentistry, under a Public Health Studentship, which paid all his university fees. His father wanted him to become a doctor or lawyer, but these courses required a prerequisite in Latin, which Tony had not studied, so he chose to study Dentistry. The other reason for studying Dentistry was that by this time he had met a girl called Kay Babette Harvey, who lived across the road from his house. Kay had a sister, Robyn, who knew Tony's brother, Vittorio, and it was these two who introduced Tony to Kay in 1958. Tony became quite friendly with Kay and often went to her place, usually on free weekends and on holidays, when he was able to leave boarding school. Here he also met Kay's cousin who was then already studying Dentistry, and he convinced Tony that it was a good course to study. He also gave Tony all his old study notes.

Kay Babette Harvey was born in Adelaide and first lived in Ward Street North Adelaide with her family. Her parents were her father Eric (aka Joe) Anderson Harvey of Scottish heritage and her

mother, Bette, who was also born in Adelaide, of German heritage. Her father Eric was born in Smithfield and then his family went to the Southeast on a sheep farm. He worked in a fruit packing shed and when he got married, went to live in Ward Street. He was an MTT double-decker bus driver, then bought a newspaper delivery round and finally was a funeral director at Alfred James & Son on Henley beach road, on the corner of Ebor Avenue, and the family lived in a house in this street, opposite Tony's parents' house. Eric was one of the first Australians to be a member of FIFA as an international soccer referee and was well known.

Kay went to an Anglican school in North Adelaide and then won a scholarship to Woodlands Church of England Grammar School (now St. Peters Woodland school) in Glenelg. Kay also became friendly with Tony's mother, who gave Kay food to take to Tony when he was boarding, as her school was near the college where Tony was staying. Kay needed help with her Physics while doing Leaving, and asked Tony to help her when he could. She said she became enamoured by his big brown eyes. She passed her Leaving Certificate (including passing in Physics) and obtained work at the Savings Bank of SA.

Tony began his Dentistry course in 1961, which started off with eleven students in Year One, with two female students, and several overseas Asian students, three of which commenced in Year Two, under a Commonwealth Government funding scheme, called the "Colombo Plan". Tony was the first student of Italian heritage to study Dentistry in Adelaide. The course was hard, with a lot of clinical work. Only Tony, of all the students in his class, finished the five-year course in one go; many dropped out or had to repeat years. There were a lot of subjects that were in conjunction with the students of Medicine, and Tony used the medical library extensively. Tony was popular and hardworking and managed to become the President of the Dental School Students Association while studying.

Tony graduated in 1965 with high honours. He had many job offers in Dentistry, but one day just before he graduated, he had gone to the Medical School library to check on some details for a paper he was working on. In the lift he met Professor Derek Rowley, who was professor of Microbiology and Immunology and one of Tony's lecturers. The Professor looked at Tony's face and told him he could treat his acne. Upon further discussions, the Professor convinced Tony to do a Ph.D. under his supervision. However, at the time, Tony was bonded to the Health Department for three years, because he had received a Public Health Department Studentship. Professor Rowley assisted him in removing the bond. However, Tony had to complete a one-year Honours Degree in Microbiology, before being able to do his Ph.D. Professor Rowley also appointed Tony as his representative on the Dental Faculty during this time, showing the high regard he had for Tony.

11-5-66

# Brilliant Record In Dentistry Course


Mr. Ielasi

Mr. Anthony Ielasi, now doing full-time research after a brilliant career as a dental student at the University of Adelaide, will have the degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery conferred on him by the Chancellor (Sir George Ligertwood) at the University's third 1966 Commemoration ceremony at the Bonython Hall tomorrow.

Mr. Ielasi is the elder son of Italian-born parents, Mr. and Mrs. Rosario Ielasi, of Torrensville.

In each of the last four years of the five-year course at the dental school, Mr. Ielasi gained top place, with three top distinctions and a top credit.

He was recommended for the Thomas D. Hannon Prize for topping the third year examination in 1963; the Dental Board of SA Prize for first place in fourth year in 1964; and the General Practice Study Group Prize for distinguishing himself in the annual examination in conservative dentistry last year.

The Faculty of Dentistry has accepted him as a candidate for the degree of Master of Dental Surgery, subject to his passing at the end of this year, a qualifying examination of the standard equivalent to the Honors Degree of Bachelor of Dental Surgery.

Mr. Ielasi is doing research at the University's department of microbiology into genetic control of species susceptible to infection.
He is doing this work on a Commonwealth Postgraduate Award.

Mr. Ielasi, who received his early education at Marist Brothers, Thebarton, and later at Sacred Heart College, said yesterday that eventually he would like to join the academic staff of a university.

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Copy of Newspaper article

Tony then began his Ph.D. in Immunology, with his thesis entitled “Genetic Control of Species susceptibility to Infections.” During the three-year course, Tony was able to obtain a National Health and Medical Research Scholarship of $8,000 for three years and he also received an ARC University grant of $1,100, which paid for the Ph.D. fees. He was also allowed to do locum work in Dentistry while doing his Ph.D., for income. He finished his Ph.D. in 1971.

On the 22nd of April 1967, while still at University, Tony married Kay, with some concerns from his father; Kay was neither an Italian nor a Catholic. Not long before, in 1965, Tony and Kay had bought a block of land for $4,000 in Cole Street Clapham, which was a new subdivision on a sloping site, with views towards the sea. Kay worked in Administration at the Savings Bank of SA and was able to obtain a favourable low-interest home loan. An architectural student friend drew up plans for a house on the site with both Tony's and Kay's input, and they started to subcontract the construction of the house, with the help of Kay's father, who was building his own new house at the same time. Tony and Kay shifted into their new home in the latter half of 1967.

When they got married, Kay had to leave her job, as married women could not work in banks in those days. She never returned to full-time work. She did return to school to learn Italian so that she could communicate better with her in-laws. She speaks and writes Italian very well. When the children were older, in high school, Kay went to work part time at a Medical Practice as a receptionist for five years and then at “Gribbles Pathology”, on the corner of Greenhill Road and Goodwood Road for seven years.

Tony augmented his income during his Ph.D. studies by lecturing and demonstrating to Dental students and clinical teaching at the Adelaide Dental School. This continued even after he finished his Ph.D. He was also appointed as a part-time senior lecturer at the Dental School, which he continued after his Ph.D.

Tony and Kay have two children, Matthew, who was born in 1968 and Ben, who was born in 1972. They both went on to become successful Accountants. Tony and Kay have four grandchildren, one boy and three girls.

When Tony finished his Ph.D., in 1971, he was offered an opportunity in Italy to do a Post Doctoral Fellowship, but Tony chose a job as a dentist with Keith Bailey who had a practice in Bath Street Glenelg. Tony worked hard and was able to buy into the practice in 1974. They also had a part-time dental practice on Norwood Parade, Norwood, and so they had many Eastern suburbs patients. Some of these patients were also of Italian heritage. Tony was in that practice for about 40 years and then went to work for the North Adelaide Dental practice for five years, where one of his former students and associate, Dr. Jonathon Rogers, asked him to join him. He was excited, but sorry that he had to leave a lot of his long-standing patients behind at the Glenelg practice.

The North Adelaide Dental practice was forward thinking and was involved in the new changes in dental technology and techniques, and Tony relished the new challenges. He had to undertake further advanced courses in the use of Lasers, microscope digital technology and advanced root canal therapy, implant dentistry and the advent of digital radiography and CAD design and 3D printing of crowns, all new techniques that radically changed the way dental practice was carried out. This change of the dentistry practice was very expensive, with the purchasing and use of the new equipment; it required a lot of study and practice, but Tony felt they were the best years of his life as a dentist. The North Adelaide Dental practice also helped dental students who were able to come to the practice and observe firsthand and in a practical way these new dental technologies

and techniques.

Tony also became involved in mentoring final year Dentistry students particularly in clinical practice methods and techniques. In 2007 he was made a Fellow of the International Honour Dental Organisation, the Pierre Fauchard Academy, in recognition of his work. Tony retired from the North Adelaide Dental practice, and from dentistry, in 2011, aged 69. He still keeps in touch with his old school friends and work associates.



Other prizes they receive include **$1,000** in travellers' cheques donated by the **Bank of New South Wales**, a fashion wardrobe to the value of **$250** from Walter Kristensen and Juvenic Cosmetics from Paul McNeil Agencies to the value of **$200** They have already received during the Quest a number of valuable incentive prizes in accordance with their level of fund raising.

**Miss Charity Runner-up is Michelle Olson aged 18 who raised the sum of $14,590**

*Miss Personality Cathy Hughes (right) and Miss Charity Connie Georgiadis with Quest Chairman Dr. Tony Ielasi on stage after the presentation.*

*Photo by Milton Wordley*

and was sponsored by the **Prospect Lions Club.** She has won a trip for two to Sydney flying **Ansett Airlines of Australia** with six nights accommodation at **Ramada Inn** donated by **Bennetts Kingfisher Travel**

copy of Newspaper article

Tony was also involved during his working life (and in some cases still is) with the Sacred Heart Old Scholars, becoming President of the School Board, and he helped start the Sacred Heart Foundation that raised millions of dollars for the school. He was also a member of one of the Lions Clubs, eventually becoming President. He was the Deputy District Governor and Chair of the Miss Personality Quest which raised money for the Save Sight Foundation. He raised money to start the first Eye Bank at Flinders University, which appointed the first Chair of Ophthalmology (Prof. Doug Coster). He is involved with the Emmaus Parish Council, President of the St. Vincent De Paul Society, the Knights of the Southern Cross, and was on the Archbishop Wilson's Archdiocesan Pastoral Council.

One of Tony's best achievements, after he retired, was his major involvement in the establishment of the St. Teresa Community Garden and gathering space in Colonel Light Garden. He commenced this in 2014 gathering volunteers and applying for and obtaining various grants (Mitcham City Council Community Grants, a State Community Benefits Grant, a Lions Club Grant, and others, all realising some $30,000). He also organised raffles and obtained further donations, both monetary and in kind. He was instrumental in convincing Renewal SA to use the space to conduct a 20-week Certificate Course in theoretical and practical garden design,

carpentry, concreting, and brick laying among other things, resulting in twenty-five students receiving their “TAFE Cert. 2” certificates. This work, along with volunteers, established the garden. A Government youth programme (Work for the Dole) was also used to repair fences and sheds, upgrade roofing and water run-off and painting. Local Primary school children were involved in planting native and vegetable gardens. The garden was formally opened in 2016 by



Proud Parish Archbishop Wilson gets a guided tour through the gardens at the official opening day.

Catholic Archbishop Wilson. Volunteers under Tony's direction, still maintain the gardens. The space has been used to this day by a variety of community uses.

# Garden brings community together

## By Lindy McNamara

In what is a good example of putting Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* encyclical into action, the grounds of St Therese Church at Colonel Light Gardens have been given a new lease of life.

A three-year project which has involved not only members of the Emmaus parish but also the wider community has resulted in the garden, presbytery and church undergoing a major facelift and being turned into a "wonderful gathering place" for people to enjoy.

Last month the garden was officially opened by Archbishop Wilson, who said he hoped and observed with much joy how the development had progressed over the years.

St Therese parishioner Dr Tony Ielasi was a driving force behind the project and explained how it grew out of necessity, rather than need.

"The presbytery at St Therese hadn't been lived in for a long time and the land around it, which is quite large, was really overgrown. It looked abandoned, the hedges were broken and there was a homeless person living in one of the sheds. It got to the stage where something needed to be done,"

he said. "We started by clearing the land, it really went from there ... and one thing led to another."
**PROUD PARISH:** Archbishop Wilson gets a guided tour through the gardens at the official opening day.
While it has been a labour of love for members of the Emmaus parish, people from the wider community also have been involved.
A contact in the parish from Renewal SA arranged for TAFE SA to organise Certificate II courses which enabled unemployed people to assist with the work.
The parish hosted two, 10-week TAFE courses, with the 20 participants building planter boxes and concrete paths as well as constructing a barbecue and pergola.
Then the not-for-profit training, employment and youth services Training Prospects and MADEC combined to create a work-for-the-dole project to finish the job. They repaired fences and upgraded roofing, painted the presbytery and church, and fixed up old sheds outside.
The presbytery was fenced off and is now rented to a young family from the Holy [Cross] Church at Goodwood.
Students from the three parish schools [and parishioners] at Kingswood, St Thomas' at Goodwood, and St Therese's at Colonel Light Gardens got involved in planting [trees, vegetables and flowers], making a vegetable garden.
"It's a real demonstration of *Laudato Si'* in action and has been a great way of bringing the schools and churches closer together," said Tony.
"Now that it is finished, it is a lovely area with raised garden beds, a barbecue, paths, paving and lawn areas. A big shade house was donated by a parishioner from Kingswood and there are two rainwater tanks now so the church is self-sufficient for water."
Tony estimated the cost totalled about $45,000 and wouldn't have been possible without an initial community grant from Mitcham Council and a major grant from Community Benefits SA. Grants from the Lions Club of Mitcham and independent MP Martin Hamilton-Smith, together with donations from businesses and other community groups were also received.
"We've been very lucky. What was once derelict is visually quite beautiful now.
"While the hard labour is finished, Tony said that the shade house, garden areas and barbecue facilities are now available for ongoing use by local students, the parish community and the wider community.
"We would especially also like to involve parishioners from different cultural backgrounds," he said.
"It's been challenging and fulfilling work but a wonderful way of unifying the parish."

Tony never did enmesh himself in the Italian society during his working life, except for his patients, friends and family. However, especially in his retirement, he has grown vegetables and planted fruit trees, made preserves, and has returned to the old Italian way of life, with wine and good food. He is also fond of fishing. In his quiet, but determined, way, Tony is well respected and loved by many people.

In his retirement, Tony and Kay have done a lot of travelling throughout Europe and especially Italy, going to the villages where his parents were born. Here he met all his aunties and uncles and cousins. He saw that many of his relatives were well off, but he also noted that some villagers lived in poverty. There was also a notable influence of the Mafia. When he asked why there were some houses and shops that had shutter doors, he was quietly told there were still kidnappings. He loved the splendour and history of Italy, but he was glad that his family had decided to emigrate to Australia for a better life.

Edited by Mario Russo

# From Benestare to Basket Range

Benestare is a town in the Province of Reggio Calabria, located 90 kilometres southwest of Catanzaro and 40 kilometres east of Reggio Calabria. Situated in the hills with a view to the sea, it boasts beautiful landscapes, including vineyards and olive groves.

The market gardens in Basket Range and surrounding Adelaide Hills area (including Ashton, Uraidla and Summertown) are renowned for producing high-quality, cool-climate fruit and vegetables. Italian families arrived in the area in the late 1920s, first working as hired labourers and then eventually buying their own land and setting up their own businesses. Here is a small glimpse of some of the families involved.

## Rocco and Teresa Musolino

Rocco Musolino was born 1904 in Benestare, Reggio Calabria to parents Giuseppe Musolino and Giuseppina Codispoti. He had eleven siblings, who all migrated to Australia after him.

After completing his National Service (Carabiniere Ausiliario), Rocco chose to try his luck in Australia, as there was little work available in 1920s Calabria and immigration possibilities from Italy to the United States had closed. Rocco came to Australia on his own, working his passage on a cargo ship, arriving in Melbourne in 1927. From Melbourne, he worked his way up along the Riverland, fruit-picking, doing odd-jobs, earning a living in any way he could. He spoke no English, but his physique told of a competent labourer. Mostly, he slept in tin sheds, keeping cool in summer by hanging wet sacking across windows. When he recounted these times, he was fond of saying that he lived off “rabbits and rhubarb”, which were plentiful and free.

Rocco eventually found his way to Adelaide and then into the Adelaide Hills, particularly to Basket Range, where his brother Rosario had also settled. He worked as a hired-hand for fruit growers and market-gardeners in the area. As soon as he had saved enough money, he bought his own plot of land and began market-gardening for himself, also building a modest home for himself.

In 1935, his father in Italy informed him he had organised a proxy bride for him, an arrangement made between two fathers, as was the custom at the time. Maria Teresina Caminiti, born in 1912 in neighbouring town Careri, Reggio Calabria arrived via luxury liner accompanied by an extensive dowry. Teresa, as she was called, landed in Outer Harbour in 1936 where the young couple met for the first time.

Teresa was active in the production of the market garden, while also bearing seven children: Valeria (1937), Antonio (1939), Elliott (1941 - 1942), Elena (1943), Concettina (1945), Elliott (1947), Dean (1952). Their third child died in infancy at 14 months, a dark time for Rocco and Teresa.

The children attended the local primary school in Basket Range and Sunday School. They walked everywhere as there was only their father’s truck for transport which was needed for taking goods to market. They mostly socialised with all the other children of the district, many of whom were related. However, they were also expected to work in the gardens, especially during the picking season for the various vegetables and fruit grown, which occasionally meant missing school. Daughter, Connie recalls vividly being visited by one of the nuns when the children had failed to turn up to church and Sunday school – they were needed for the intensive work of potato-picking, and their parents were not in the least bit apologetic.

It was an era where everyone was expected to assimilate, and the older children recall anglicising their names, and trying to fit in, especially at school. In the home, the couple spoke their dialect.

Rocco learnt to speak English early and taught himself to read and write when his children started school by following along with their readers and lessons. Teresa never learnt to speak English fluently but could make herself understood and was a resourceful homemaker and very clever with managing the family's money. She had arrived in Australia with a glory box filled with luxury embroidered items and even a silk bedspread, spun from the silk of her family's silkworms raised in their own mulberry trees, but most of those items were never used because Teresa felt they were 'too good' for the very rudimentary house in which they lived. When her first daughter was ready to marry, Teresa had ample items to be able to divide her glory box among her three daughters.

Rocco sponsored his brother Fred, who eventually bought his own land and also established himself in the area. Rocco was also instrumental in sponsoring other Mussolino families (double 's' spelling of the surname) from his region, who were unrelated, but previously known. These families bought land in Virginia and established market gardens in that area.

During the war years (1939-1945), Rocco was fortunate not to have been interned due to the necessity of having primary production continue, but his truck was requisitioned and he was expected to report to the police station in Summertown on a weekly basis.

In 1974, Teresa and Rocco returned to Italy for three months. Rocco had sponsored all of his family to come to Australia, but Teresa had been the only one of her family to migrate.

In retirement, Rocco and Teresa moved to Rostrevor. Rocco passed away in 1978 and Teresa in 2000.

## Concettina Musolino



In 1966, daughter Connie married local, Greg Golding, whose family had established itself in Ashton when his father Peter Golding had taken up a land thanks to the Returned Soldier Settlement Scheme in the early 1950s.

Connie worked as a Ledger Machine operator in the Accounts Office of Demasius Department Store in Burnside. Greg completed an Agricultural Science Degree and worked at the Waite Institute in the plant breeding section. In 1969, he decided to become self-employed, growing vegetables and strawberries on land at Ashton. Greg marketed these at the East End Market in Rundle Street and then the Pooraka Market when wholesale trading moved there in 1988.

The couple had three children: Joanne (1969), Darren (1970) and Lindy (1972).

In 1995, Greg and his son Darren planted vines on their property at Lobethal and in 2002, produced their first vintage, launching the Golding Wines label. The winery, in the Adelaide Hills, was established by Darren and his wife Lucy. In December 2019, the area was devastated by the Black Summer bushfires, with the winery suffering the loss of 26 hectares of vines and much of its infrastructure. As they were rebuilding, another personal loss, the sudden death of patriarch,

Greg, the following June also hit hard. With determination and assistance from the Department of Primary Industries SA, the Goldings have been able to re-establish a stunningly beautiful property, cellar door and function centre and are making remarkable inroads, growing their label and winning awards for the quality of their cool climate wines.

Matriarch Connie, continues to be a very active member of her community, working to support others through her extensive involvement in her Adelaide Hills Catholic Parish.

## Rosario and Filomena Musolino

Rosario and Filomena Musolino were both born in the small village of Benestare in Reggio Calabria, Italy. Rosario, born on 23 January 1902, made the courageous decision to migrate to South Australia in 1927 in search of greater opportunities, settling in the close-knit community of Basket Range. His brothers, Ferdinando and Rocco, soon followed, and together they established their lives in the district, laying the foundations for what would become a lasting family legacy in the Adelaide Hills. Rosario's first employment was in the apple orchards of the Mason family at nearby Forest Range, travelling more than six kilometres on foot each day to get to work. His unwavering determination, strong work ethic and commitment to building a better future for his family quickly became defining qualities that would shape not only his own life, but the generations that followed.

Rosario had married Filomena Giorgio in 1925. Filomena was the sister of Rosario Giorgio, who would later also emigrate to Australia and settle in Basket Range in 1937. The young couple began their family in Italy, experiencing the heartbreaking loss of their first child before welcoming their son, Attilio, in 1926. Like many young families in rural Reggio Calabria during the 1920s, Rosario and Filomena faced limited opportunities and an uncertain economic future. Determined to create a brighter future for his growing family, Rosario made the courageous decision to emigrate to South Australia in 1927 on his own. In the past, Rosario's grandfather had made three trips to the United States, to fulfill work contracts in Philadelphia, but the borders to the US had closed to Italian immigrants at this time. To get to South Australia, Rosario was sponsored by Enrico Cua from Careri (Reggio Calabria) who went on to establish the Sunrise Cannery at Flinders Park. He had been one of the first Italians to settle in Adelaide and had gained his British citizenship early, allowing him to sponsor others, which he did on a regular basis.



In 1934, after seven years apart, Rosario was finally reunited with his wife, Filomena, and their son, Attilio. Such a long separation must have been daunting, but the joy of their reunion gave them the courage needed to aspire to a more stable life for themselves. Together they purchased a parcel of land in Basket Range, marking the beginning of a new chapter for the family and laying the foundations for the life and legacy they would build together.

The property was densely covered with native stringybark scrub and transforming it into productive farmland required years of determination and hard work. Much of the land was cleared using horse and chain before being completed by hand. From the locally sourced Basket Range sandstone uncovered on the property, Rosario worked alongside local

builders to construct the family's first home, carefully hauling the stone to the building site himself.

The original home comprised four rooms, three bedrooms and a living room, with a separate timber lean-to kitchen at the rear and other outbuildings typical of rural homes of the era. Though modest by today's standards, it became the heart of a busy and growing family. As the family expanded, so too did the home. In 1954, Rosario added two additional rooms to create a larger kitchen and lounge, while the original kitchen was transformed into an indoor bathroom and toilet with hot water, a significant milestone that reflected the family's growth and the rewards of years of hard work and perseverance.



Alongside the family home, one of Rosario's first priorities was to establish a market garden, cultivating a range of seasonal vegetables and fruits. Through hard work and determination this soon became the family's livelihood and the foundation of a business that would continue for years to come. Initially, he had a small orchard, growing apples, pears and cherries to suit the cooler climate of the area. He expanded the orchard when the Suez Canal was blocked in the 1950s and South Australia became one of the prime suppliers for apples to the British Isles. This was achieved through all the growers in the area banding together to form the Ashton Co-op which handled all the technical details of this important trade opportunity.

The couple went on to have more children. After Attilio, born in 1923 in Italy, Umberto was born in 1936 in Australia however, tragically died from childhood cancer in 1940. Santina was born in 1941, followed by Grazia in 1942 and Maxwell in 1946. Youngest, Kevin, was born in 1950.

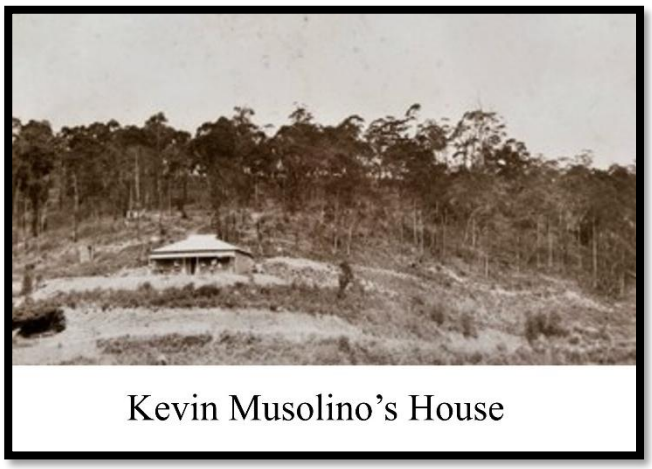


During WWII, when other Italians were interned, Rosario was spared, with the police only confiscating the gelignite that he used for clearing land, fearful that it might be used to blow up a bridge. Rosario, who had become naturalized as soon as he could, was allowed to keep his truck which he had converted into a utility vehicle himself from Sir Thomas Playford's 1924 Dodge which he bought in Norton Summit in 1937. He taught himself how to drive it and used it to take his fruit and vegetables to the East End Wholesale market, leaving Basket Range at 3am to be in the city for early trading. He survived the war years without experiencing too much racism, however decided to remove his surname from the door of his truck when it was defaced because of the similarity in surname to the Italian dictator.

## Kevin Musolino

Growing up, all the Musolino children were involved in the family's market gardening concern, each having their allocated chores which they did before or after school, at weekends and during holidays. Kevin remembers that the family would consume the fallen or the bird-pecked fruit, reserving the good crop for sale. He has very fond memories of his early years, when despite the necessary physical work, the tight family and community connections provided support, stability and entertainment.

As a young boy, Kevin would walk the twenty minutes into the Basket Range township to attend the local primary school which he enjoyed. He recalls experiencing some name calling, but it didn't worry him too much. The greatest discrimination was not for his Italian background but for his Catholic background. He remembers job advertisements with the tag 'Catholics need not apply' and while there was no legislation preventing the employment of Catholics in public sector jobs, it was not until 1965, with the election of the first Catholic premier, Frank Walsh, that these barriers began to dissolve.



Kevin Musolino's House

Thanks to their mother's influence, the family had a strong connection to their Catholic faith. For their secondary schooling, older brothers Attilio and Max were sent as boarders to Sacred Heart College and his sisters travelled into the city to attend Saint Aloysius College. By the time Kevin reached secondary school age, he was able to take the bus to Rostrevor College where he completed his Intermediate Certificate and then joined his father on the family property. In 1967, Kevin took over the market run as his father had reached age 65 and was waning in energy. Rosario passed away only five years later. He died suddenly on the 14th of July 1972, age 70, when Kevin was only 21 years old. The property was willed in equal portions to Rosario's wife and children. Kevin, eager to continue his parents' legacy, went on to become the sole owner of the family business, capably leading it into its next chapter. The Musolino market garden and orchard were more than just a business. They were a pivotal centre of the family's activities and celebrations. Across the years, Kevin was also able to provide work for family members, friends, travellers and students, in this way building a strong community network.

In 1980, at the age of 30, Kevin married Concetta (Connie) Leonello. While Connie was Adelaide born, her family's heritage traced back to Sinopoli in Calabria, continuing the shared Italian roots of both families. Their wedding was celebrated in Connie's parish at Tranmere, before the couple began their married life together in Basket Range. Following Rosario's passing, his mother Filomena, continued to live in the family home until her own passing in 1981, at the age of 74, following a battle with cancer. Kevin and Connie welcomed two children, son Rosario (1981) and daughter Filomena (1983).

With great regret, in 1997, Kevin made the painful decision to walk away from primary production as it was no longer a sustainable occupation, due to the large-scale importing of produce from other countries that did not have the same growing restrictions imposed on them as Australian producers. Kevin took up truck driving and courier delivery around the city until retirement. The

couple continue to live in Basket Range and have a wealth of knowledge about the area and a great fondness for life in this little pocket of South Australia.

## Rosario and Filomena Giorgio

When Rosario Giorgio and his father Antonio arrived in Basket Range-South Australia in 1937, they were delighted to find an outlook and soil profile similar to their hometown, Benestare, Calabria. In addition, they were welcomed by other family members who had already migrated and settled in Basket Range, including brother-in-law, Rosario Musolino who had arrived ten years earlier.



Rosario found work as a farm hand on a market-gardening property owned by the descendants of SA pioneer Stan Horsnell. In addition, where time allowed, he undertook private contracts as a stone mason, his profession in Italy. Antonio worked as a farm hand on Rosario Musolino's market garden. Rosario worked for the Horsnell family for 10 days short of 10 years.

Rosario managed to buy two acres of land on the side of a steep hill in Basket Range in 1942. He built a four-room house with no internal plumbing entirely by himself, using sandstone which he dug out from the top of the hill. Rosario cut the stones to size and slid them down the hill to the building site on an ingenious sled system which he himself devised.



Rosario's brother Paolo joined them in Australia leaving behind his wife Maria and four children. During the war years, Rosario and Paolo had their movements restricted (they needed to report to the police every week and needed a permit to leave the district),

In 1947, Rosario was married by proxy to Filomena Perre, also from Benestare. It took two years for the paperwork to be completed, finally allowing Rosario's wife Filomena and Paolo's wife Maria Talladira and their four children Antonio, Filomena, Michael, and Giuseppina with Rosario's bride to travel by ship to South Australia.

As was the custom, Filomena Perre arrived in Adelaide with a substantial dowry of linens and household goods. The young couple were distressed to learn that Filomena's entire glory box,

consisting of several trunks, had been seized by customs. Filomena was under suspicion of having imported a large commercial quantity of woven fabric.

Rosario and Filomena enlisted the services of a lawyer to represent them in their dispute with customs. Unfortunately, their lawyer failed to understand, and therefore explain to the court, why the rolls of woven fabric were so narrow and how they were going to be turned into household linen. Frustrated by their lawyer's inadequate representation, Rosario, stood up and asked permission to address the court himself. In his limited English, he explained that every roll of linen had been woven by his wife or other family members on the family's narrow weaving loom. He described the process of cutting the linen into strips and then stitching the strips together to make sheets and blankets. To their delight Rosario's explanation was accepted by the court and the glory box in its entirety was released. Filomena got busy transforming those linen strips into all manner of household linens. She continued to embroider, with examples of her fine handiwork passed down and treasured by her children.



The couple and Rosario's parents settled in the 4-room house in Basket Range and were soon joined by four children: Tony (1950), Ross (1952), John (1953) and Dora (1955).

Ross, Tony and John began their schooling at Basket Range Primary, the very small local school. However, by 1960, the family had well and truly outgrown their house, and they decided to move to Magill, again to a house entirely built by Rosario. The older three children remember moving into the new house without floor coverings as Rosario refused to buy anything he could not pay for in cash. All four children completed their primary education at Magill Primary School.



Rosario secured work at Gilburn Brick Co. in Magill, working there for fifteen years before retiring at the age of 62.

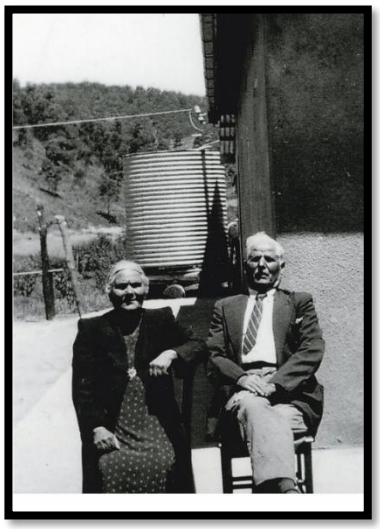
During those 15 years he continued to work as a stone mason on weekends. He built an excellent reputation for his skilled masonry work around Adelaide which was expanding rapidly with the influence of mass migration. As he grew into his teens, Ross, his second son, often laboured for him on weekends. Many of the beautiful stone walls built by Rosario can still be seen standing today, in the Manor at Basket Range and in the many retaining walls in the Adelaide hills and suburb.



The Italian families, living at Basket Range supported each other and continued the traditions of their agricultural backgrounds: planting apple, pear and cherry orchards, market-gardening, grape and olive growing to make their own wine, vinegar and oil, raising pigs for sausages and smallgoods, growing tomatoes to make their passata. On weekends, many *paesani* came to visit and to help, especially during harvest on Rosario Musolino's large market garden.

When Rosario and Filomena Giorgio moved to Magill, the tradition of shared meals continued on Saturdays, opening their home to whoever came to visit. There was never any need for an appointment.

Filomena and Rosario were happily married for over 60 years. Rosario died in 2010 at the age of 94. Filomena died in 2013 at the age 89. They are survived by three sons-Tony, Ross and John, a daughter, Dora, seven grandchildren and six great grandchildren.





## Ross Giorgio

Ross recalls his early years in Basket Range with great fondness; recalling crowds of cousins to play with and many extended family occasions and celebrations. At the age of fifteen, he went to work in furniture manufacturing, completing an apprenticeship with Panczak and Willemberg, a German furniture manufacturer located at Magill. In 1976 he joined his cousins at Interior Joinery and Furniture (IJF), founded by brothers Ross and Reg Monteleone in 1964. Also working in the business were Ross and Reg's younger brothers, Geoff, Murray and Ken. The brothers also had connections to Basket Range, all being born in the area other than Ken. Ross is still working at IJF 50 years later.

Ross and his wife Jeanette bought the original Basket Range property in 1975 with a view to building and settling there. However, the house, which was over 35 years old had deteriorated significantly, with the original lime mortar making it unstable. They demolished the house but retained the original stone shed and some of the retaining walls built by Rosario. They rebuilt a new family home on the original site, and in the family tradition, Ross completed much of the construction himself. Ross and Jeanette lived in Basket Range with their children Carl, born in 1986 and Sian, born in 1990 for over 30 years. In 2010, they chose to relocate closer to the city, noting that Basket Range had become a little isolated with no public transport, an issue as residents aged.

Ross' younger brother John sadly passed away in 2020 following a long battle with illness. Ross and Jeanette remain close to Tony, his wife Cathy, Dora and her husband Ken and John's wife Prue and their families. They keep up the tradition of regularly sharing meals and celebrating good times together.

# Judge Pasquale Tiberio Pirone LLB

## The first Italian-born District Court Judge in South Australia.

***His legacy lives not only in what he achieved, but in the kindness behind his smile***

## This story has been written as told by Judge Pasquale Pirone's second daughter, Registered Psychologist Cristina (Cris) Pirone.

My father instilled in me the solid values of love, respect and connection, of humbleness and a desire to help others. Throughout my life and in my career as a Psychologist, I have always been inspired and influenced by my father's incredible love of learning, personal growth and desire to support others.



My father Pasquale Tiberio Pirone was born on 17 May 1935 in a small village called Tufara Valle, in the Province of Benevento, Italy. He was the eldest of three sons born to Virgilio Pirone and Teresa (nee Parente). His adored younger brothers, Rolando and Amerigo were also born in Tufara Valle. Rolando went on to become a tailor, designing and crafting the most beautifully hand sewn suits. Rolando made many of my father's suits and he wore them with such pride and honour. His youngest brother Amerigo went on to become the founder and Director of a successful steel fabrication and coating company "American Wrought Iron". The original factory site was on Port Road Woodville, later moving to Humphries Terrace, Kilkenny.

Tufara Valle is located on the famous Roman Via Apia. My father told stories of living in the village in a close-knit and loving family, surrounded by loving parents, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins and friends. His neighbours were his cousins, and his aunt owned and ran a coffee shop called "Bar Stella". There were many stories shared about being mischievous little children enjoying their childhood together, with little food or material wealth. Life was simple, rich in connection. The family worked the land, living a full and present life grounded in relationships and shared experiences.

From a young age, my father was very studious. He had a natural curiosity and a strong desire to learn. However, due to the family's poverty, the only way he could receive a formal education was to enter the Monastery at 12 years of age. This was a great sacrifice for his family as they needed

him on the land, but they valued education enough to let him go. My father's maternal uncle was a priest which made entry into the Monastery easier, however life in the Monastery was not easy, with strict rules to abide by. As a young child this was at times a challenge to uphold. My father told us stories of the long trips his mother, father and brothers would make to visit him in the Monastery, bringing him food and small gifts which he cherished, and this brought such comfort as he missed his family dearly. These were his formative years for education and religion.

Prior to entering the Monastery, the way my paternal grandfather, (Nonno Virgilio) illustrated the importance of this opportunity for education, was to take my father on a walk on their land in Tufara. These were different times with different standards. My father said that just prior to entering the Monastery my Nonno placed a heavy tree stump on my father's shoulders. Unbeknownst to him, the wood was infested with ants. As he carried it, he was bitten repeatedly. When his mother saw my father walking up the hill, she protested only to be met with a rebuff from my Nonno that he was "teaching his son a lesson". The message was clear: he could continue a life of hardship on the land or pursue the path of education and associated opportunities. That experience stayed with my father forever. Not only teaching him the importance of a hard decision to make in that moment, knowing the pain his father felt about him moving to the Monastery, but also it instilled in him the value of making hard decisions, sacrifices and always aiming for better opportunities in life.

At the Monastery, my father met Antonio Pirone, another 12-year-old boy, who became his best friend in childhood and then into their adult years. Antonio went on to become a Franciscan Monk, and we all came to know him in our lives as Father Luke Pirone. Though not related, they shared a surname and formed a lifelong friendship. Their bond endured across continents and Father Luke remained a source of love, guidance, and support to our family for all my father's life and after his death. Though he may not have been in the Monastery to ultimately become a priest, my father said that he grew to love the life and the experiences he shared there with his peers.

After leaving Italy, Father Luke spent many years working in South Korea and then in the early 1970's Father Luke was transferred to Sydney, Australia. My father and his lifelong friend (spiritual brother as they referred to each other) reunited after more than 20 years. This friendship rekindled so effortlessly and then not long after, Father Luke was transferred to Adelaide, where he was initially based at Albert Park Catholic Parish and then at Hectorville Catholic Parish. Father Luke became a very significant part of our family. He baptised many of the Pirone children, including my brother Steve. He celebrated the marriages of my sister, brother and myself and he baptised all our children. We have been so blessed in this friendship that we shared with Father Luke.

After World War 11, there was little opportunity or work in Italy, as the country tried to recover from the rubble of war. Many families decided to migrate to other countries in search of opportunities for a better life. Despite their love for Italy, my father's family understood that their future life would be limited if they remained there.

My Nonno Virgilio had many siblings. Some remained in Italy; one moved to the United States of America and the rest moved to Adelaide South Australia. I assume that they all moved to Adelaide to follow each other for better opportunities and to remain connected with one another during this time of migration. My Nonno migrated with others from his village to Adelaide in 1949 to establish himself there and build a better life for himself and his family who would follow later. When he was established sufficiently, he decided to call my father, his oldest child, to migrate to Adelaide and be with him. At 16 years of age, my father was told that he would have to leave the Monastery to move to Australia. My father was very sad at knowing this, but he did as he was

told and knew he had to support the family decisions.

My father left Italy for Australia in 1951 on the ship "*Sebastianio Caboto*". As his father had left for Australia two years prior, he travelled with other older male relatives and family friends. His mother and younger brothers remained in Italy until a stable life could be established in Australia. I recall a story my father shared, of having travelled for many weeks on the ship to Australia and that he had been influenced by the older males he was travelling with to start smoking cigarettes on this voyage. When the ship arrived, his father was waiting for him with much anticipation. He said that as he disembarked, he lit up a cigarette while he said, "Ciao Papa!" He recalls his father's shock and disapproval at seeing him smoking, and he greeted his son with a firm hand. My father realised then that, while he had needed to grow up quickly, leaving the monastery, his mother and brothers and his homeland, he was still just a child and valued the guidance of his father in this new land they were to call home.

My father and Nonno first lived in Keswick with the men they had travelled with from Italy. They shared a house, supported one another, and worked hard to make enough money to bring his mother and brothers over to Australia. His early work was labouring; one of his first jobs was as a brickmaker in Adelaide, a difficult job for a young man not used to hard labouring work. Between 1951 and 1956, he held a range of jobs, including packer, spray-painter, shop assistant and salesman. In 1956, he entered the public service as a clerk in the Police Department, which marked the beginning of his transition into a professional career.

Due to the perseverance and hard work of my Nonno and father, it was not long before my father's mother and brothers joined them in Adelaide. Then later, the family moved to better premises on South Road, Mile End. By then, my father had started working as a land agent and conveyancer. He supported his parents in purchasing this home.

My father met my mother, Elizabeth, when she was 16 and he was 18. They met at a party in Adelaide. They both spoke little English. She had migrated, at the age of 14, with her family from Croatia, moving to Adelaide after an initial period at the Bonegilla migrant camp in Victoria. The young couple continued to date for four years. They showed great love and respect for each other. When they met, my mother was loved and accepted by my father's family and he in turn was adored by my mother's family, who were also living in Adelaide. My mother decided to learn the Italian language as my Nonno expected her to speak Italian if she was to become a part of the Pirone family.



Wedding Day 8th June 1957

My mother and father married in 1957 and lived with his family in Mile End for a few years before purchasing their first home together in Hilton. Their home in Hilton became a dwelling where they also supported many friends and family members, who arrived as migrants to Adelaide. They offered them a place to live for a short while as they settled in this new country.

My mother and father had three children, my sister Teresa (Terry), myself, Cristina (Cris) and my

brother Stephen (Steve). We grew up in a very loving and close-knit family. Our parents modelled and lived by solid values of love, respect and connection. Terry worked as a Ward Assistant at the Royal Adelaide Hospital; I work as a Psychologist with Centacare Catholic Community Services and Steve works as a Freight Manager for Australia Post.


Graduation Party celebrating Bachelor of Law

Together, my father and mother built a life grounded in love, mutual support and shared goals and dreams. My mother supported my father in achieving his dreams. She did not resume her schooling after arriving in Adelaide and had to work as a young girl to support the family income. Her early jobs were in factories in Adelaide. However, my mother spoke nine languages, some of which included Polish, French, Croatian, English, Italian, Hungarian. Therefore, by the age of 20 she worked for the South Australian Police department as a translator. Many years later my mother found work at the Southern Cross Nursing home supporting the elderly in the community. She valued this work highly and then later in her life she volunteered with "Pisa" (now known as "Nonna's Cucina").

My father worked full time supporting a family, yet he was determined to continue his education, so he studied part time. In 1962, he qualified as a licensed land-broker and then completed a Diploma in Accountancy in 1963. He worked as an Accountant and then a land agent/conveyancer for a few years, becoming an Associate of the Australian Society of Accountants in 1964. While he enjoyed this work, he always had a passion for and a love of the Law. That same year, after completing his Matriculation requirements, he enrolled as a part-time law student for the Bachelor of Laws Degree at the (then) University of Adelaide. His dream was to become a Lawyer and the ultimate achievement for him was to become a Judicial Officer. After graduating in 1968, with his degree in law, he was admitted to Practice in October 1969. Shortly after, he worked at Mouldens law firm in Adelaide as a staff solicitor and after a short time he became a Partner in that firm. He remained there for more than two decades, building a strong practice in common law, particularly in worker's compensation and personal injury, while also appearing in criminal matters as a Lawyer and Barrister.

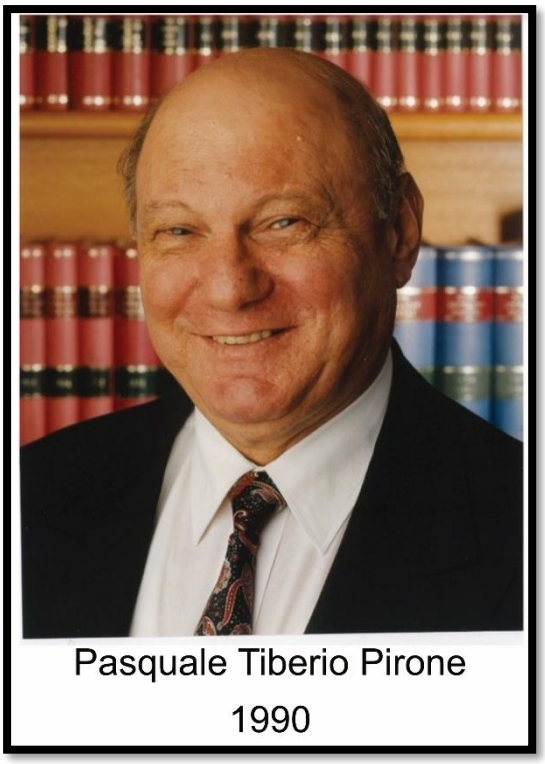

Pasquale Tiberio Pirone

He had always wanted to support the community and to find a way of helping others, a goal he took immense pride in achieving. He never took his early life experiences for granted and he always remembered the lesson of "the tree stump" on his shoulders that his father taught him in Tufara. He loved nothing more than representing his clients in court. He loved the grandness of appearing before a Judge and a Jury in the court room. On several occasions we had the privilege and honour of witnessing my father in court and observing the wisdom, awe and absolute grandness of him in this role.

My father worked very hard. As a Partner of a legal firm, he was very committed to his role and in supporting those clients he had

as a Lawyer. He would come home after his long day at work and then spend many hours in his home office continuing to work late into the night and on the weekend. It was very common that he would also support the Italian community and other migrants who would reach out to him outside of his law firm to support them with legal guidance or any other administrative issues. He would help many of his fellow "paesani" to complete their tax returns, given his accounting background, and would also help with offering them sound guidance should they be experiencing any legal concerns. He did this without any expectation of payment and felt honoured to have been able to help them.

My father was a wonderful public speaker, and he loved nothing more than to be invited to speak at events within the local Italian Community. Whether it be at a dinner dance fund raiser, or a special event that he was invited to, he would most graciously take the stage and offer a speech that was informative, engaging and interesting to those who listened. I remember that he was always on a stage with a microphone in hand and holding the attention of all those who were present.



Pasquale Tiberio Pirone
1990

In May 1990, my father fulfilled a lifelong dream when he was appointed a Judge in the District Court of South Australia. (Ref. Government Gazette of 10th May 1990 P. 1278, when the Premier was the Hon John Bannon). This appointment marked the culminating of an extraordinary journey, from teenage migrant with limited English to a respected member of the Judiciary. At his swearing-in, he described the moment as a "memorable occasion for multiculturalism". It also marked the appointment of the first Italian-born District Court Judge in South Australia, an achievement that reflected years of dedication, resilience, and the belief of working hard to achieve one's dreams. My father loved the law and the responsibility given to him in his role as Judge. (He was also described by his peers as a "warm and brilliant personality making a significant contribution to the judiciary after a notable legal career" Ref. Hansard).

As the Presiding Trial Judge, one of my father's most memorable cases (that set a precedence in similar cases of the availability of exemplary damages in negligence) was in the case of Gray v Motor Accident Commission (Ref.A36/1997) when he, Judge Pirone, adjudicated for the appellant and set damages for expenses and past and future economic losses. This case went to the Supreme Court and then to the Hight Court of Australia, where the appeal was allowed with costs, showing how Judge Pirone's determination was validated. This ruling even today remains a standard reference in Australian law regarding how Courts handle civil penalties when criminal punishment has already occurred.

I recall one of his earliest Judgements in the District Court where he had found an individual guilty of his crimes. He knew that this person was a father with a young family. He also knew that he had to sentence this individual. It was the week before Christmas and my father struggled with sentencing this individual knowing that he would leave his children and family without him over the Christmas period. What my father decided was that he would postpone the sentence till after

Christmas ensuring this person, also a father to his children, could spend those days with his family before going to Jail.

Most recently I heard a story from an elderly Italian man in the community who, upon knowing that I was the late Judge Pirone's daughter, told me that when he first came to Adelaide, he had met my father and had let him know that he was wanting to purchase a home but could not afford this. He told me that my father had lent him money to get him started. This gentleman was so very grateful for this support, and many decades later still recounts this story. This gentleman told me that he would never forget this. My father left a lasting impression on many who knew him.

My father, as a Judge, left a legal legacy in South Australia which defined him as being a pioneer for diversity where his rulings were seen as a bridge between the traditional British-derived legal system and the growing migrant communities. He took great care to ensure that those appearing before him understood the court process and his decisions, particularly when dealing with unrepresented litigants. In the Civil and Criminal Justice, system he spent over a decade presiding over complex jury trials and civil litigations, where he was known for the balance of legal rigour and empathy. So much so that many of his specific rulings are in archival "Biographical Cuttings" at the National Library of Australia which document his daily contributions to the SA Bench, and which are still referred to today by the legal fraternity.

My father returned to Italy with my mother in the 1980s. It was an emotional journey, reconnecting with family members that he had not seen since leaving in the 1950s. He valued the time he spent with his aunts, uncles and cousins. He was able to revisit childhood places. He was grateful for that time back in Italy; however, my father and mother were proud Australians and loved their life here in Adelaide.

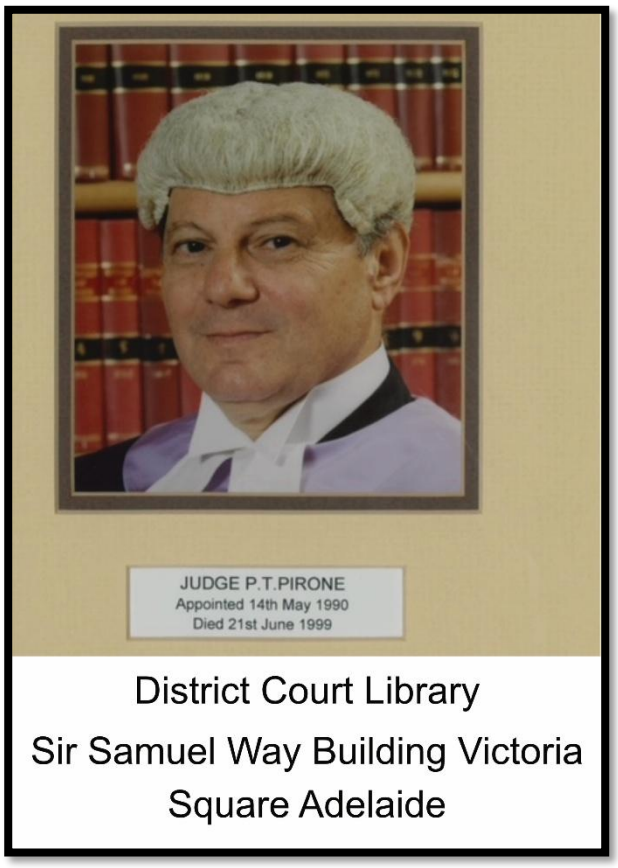


My father was very involved in the Italian community in Adelaide. He saw a gap in the resources available for the aging Italian population in Adelaide and had a vision that would become a reality, to build an Italian retirement village. It was important to him that elderly Italians could be cared for and live their final years in an environment that understood and embraced the Italian culture, language and food. So, he volunteered on the Italian Benevolent Foundation Inc. (IBF) Committee and organised many fund-raising events, the creation of the Miss Italian Village and pursued other opportunities to raise awareness and gain government support to build this village. My sister Terry was crowned the Miss Italian Village in 1981 after significant efforts and hard work, guided by my Nonno and father at raising an enormous amount of funds for this cause. He spent a great deal of time attending to community groups, fund raising, speaking at events. He was a founding member and President of the Italian Village, now known as the Benevolent Society, "Bene," which celebrated its 50th anniversary last year. (He was also mentioned in Hansard on 6th. July 2011 by the Hon. Carmel Zollo as being the first Vice President and later the second president of the Italian

IBF). He supported the senior citizens' village at St Anges, Villaggio Italia. He was also a patron of the Monteverdi Singers and regularly attended cultural and community events.

My father was a very proud man. He loved his family and his friends and cherished acquaintances that he met at gatherings to celebrate life. He enjoyed simple pleasures of having people over and entertaining. Nothing made him happier than a house filled with visitors, cooking, eating, drinking, laughing together. He was kind and generous to all and he was always available to the Italian community and many others for any legal counsel or guidance, helping anyone in need or in crisis.

He loved his work, took pride in his profession and he was incredibly humbled to have been appointed as a District Court Judge. He would hear feedback from the legal community and others that he was known as the "kind Judge" and he was proud that he could help. Many who faced court hearings would hope that they would preside before his Honour Judge Pirone.




Sadly, my father was diagnosed with cancer in 1997. This was a difficult time for us all, but he was determined to get well and to survive this. He changed his lifestyle and was dedicated to his self-care and well-being.

After being diagnosed with cancer, he made one final trip overseas in 1999. He visited Lourdes in France and undertook a pilgrimage in honour of Saint Anthony, something deeply meaningful to him.

Sadly, he passed away on 21 June 1999 aged 64 years aboard the flight returning home to Australia.

His passing was felt deeply by many in the community. On July 1999, a special sitting of the District Court of SA was convened in Adelaide to honour the life and service of Judge Pasquale (Pat) Pirone, who had died while still in office. The sitting brought together members of the Judiciary, the legal profession, government representatives and a broader community to reflect a career defined by dedication to justice, professional integrity and strong community ties. He was remembered not only as a dedicated Judge and skilled lawyer, but as a man of integrity, warmth and generosity. His life story remains a testament to the values of fairness, service and determination. He was also a role model within the migrant community, demonstrating what could be achieved through perseverance, education and a commitment to public service.

My father was a devoted Catholic, drawing strength and guidance from his faith. He held a special devotion to Saint Anthony. His younger years in the Monastery no doubt shaped this devotion. In an article of "The Southern Cross" of 28 June 1999, Catholic Archbishop Gleeson and Archbishop Faulkner, commented on the sad death of Judge Pasquale Pirone, reflecting on the many things



Family Photo 1990 Ceremony when dad became a judge.

From Left, Frank (son in law) Terry (daughter) Steve (son) Cris (daughter) Elizabeth (wife) Judge Pirone & grandaughter Melissa



Pasquale with grandson Jon

he had done for the members of the Church, and his fellow countrymen and said that the Archbishops were proud of the contributions he had made, not only to the Catholic Community but to many people in the Community noting that he had enriched them all through his work in the judicial system and as a person of integrity.

My father loved his children and grandchildren dearly. At the time of his passing, he had five grandchildren. Five more were born after his death, and one great-grand daughter (to date). Today, two of his granddaughters have followed in his footsteps, graduating with degrees in law and one practicing Law. Many of his other grandchildren have completed tertiary studies and work in the fields of Engineering, Journalism, Teaching, Nursing, Marketing, Finance, Logistics, Hospitality and Culinary Arts. His legacy continues to live on through all of us. We carry his values, his strength, and his belief in education and opportunity. We remain grateful to have known, loved, and shared life with him.

His daughter Terry died in October 2018. His wife Elizabeth died in July 2024.

The late Judge Pasquale Pirone remains a part of our heritage, our memories and an inspirational figure of our family and our community. A proud and inspirational Italian South Australian.

Edited by Mario Russo

# Maria Russo – ‘Io sono attivista’

Eighty-five-year-old, Maria Russo, invited me to interview her at her ‘People’s Shed’ in Croydon, a gathering place at the back of her home open to locals, friends and family and where testaments of Maria’s long history of civic activism, work and volunteering adorn the walls. The ‘People’s Shed’ was built by Maria’s husband, Rino Russo, in 1997 as a gathering place for locals when Croydon Primary School closed. Maria and her local community had been part of an action group vociferously protesting the closure, but the state government of the time had embarked on a program of restructuring and had begun closing schools whose enrolments were too low for economic viability. The protests had galvanised the local community over several years, and wanting to keep that sense of community alive, Maria and Rino sacrificed their superannuation savings to create the People’s Shed. For decades, it was a place where locals gathered, especially on Saturday mornings when Maria cooked her ‘zeppole’, free to anyone passing by or dropping in.



Maria’s activism is rooted in her desire to see justice and equality available to all, regardless of one’s economic or social status. In her small village in the province of Benevento (Campania), her mother, Vitalina Boffa, an agricultural day labourer had been a strong unionist, even hosting union meetings in her own home, to foster fairer conditions for this notoriously exploited group of workers during the early 1950s in the new post-war Italian republic.

Maria’s father, Antonio Fuggi, a brickmaker, had applied for his family including his wife and three children to migrate to Australia, but had been refused due to high blood pressure. Ten years later, he was enthusiastic to see his daughter attempt her luck when her mother’s brother agreed to sponsor her. In Italy, from age 16, Maria had completed one year as an apprentice at a glove factory and then had worked there a further two years on a very basic wage. Her sister had already migrated to the United Kingdom, but Maria always hoped to see Australia. Her plan was to come for a couple of years and then return to Italy.

The spunky twenty-year old, travelled on her own, arriving in Adelaide in January 1962, going to live at her uncle’s house. Immediately, she began work as a seamstress (for which, like many Italian women, she had also completed classes in her village from a young age). She found work at a company in Hindley Street called ‘Modern Tailoring’ run by Con Moschis. They manufactured men’s and women’s suits and other general menswear. Maria’s role was to work in the store front, taking measurements and making adjustments according to customer needs, finishing off hems and seams which were still done by hand in those days. She met Rino Rossi Russo, a qualified carpenter/joiner who had been in Adelaide since 1956 and they married in November 1963. In 1971, Rino opened his own business, Ace Shop Fitters.

The couple had their first child in 1964, but tragedy struck when their son died only a few hours after birth. This was a very dark time for Maria who was heavily medicated so that it was several years before she could recall what had actually happened to her. The baby was taken away by a funeral home who only buried the infant three weeks later in a mass children's grave in West Terrace. The death certificate received from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital claimed that her son Bernardino had been buried at the Hindmarsh Cemetery a few days after his birth, without giving any identifying details about his grave site. Maria and her family searched for over thirty years to find out what had happened to her first born. This involved extensive and expensive detective work, trawling through public records as they became available, even gaining permission to have a woman's grave exhumed, believing that the baby might have been buried with her, as they had died at the same time. Thanks to one of her daughters, a researcher with the SA Museum, and Frank Pangallo, journalist and MLC, the concealed practice of burying children in unmarked mass-graves or handing over bodies to medical research without permission of parents was exposed to sensational media attention. It was not until 2024 that a large group of parents found the whereabouts of their babies in a forgotten corner of the West Terrace Cemetery. Maria and her family were finally able to rebury Bernardino and give him a proper headstone on the anniversary of his 60th birthday. Investigations are on-going regarding this barbaric past practice.

In 1965, Maria gave birth again to Franca, the first of four daughters (Angelina, Lina and Anna Maria), followed by a son (Dino), then two more daughters (Antonetta and Rina). Nine years later in 1986, at age forty-five, Maria gave birth to her ninth child, son David.

While listening to an Italian language radio show dedicated to women's affairs broadcast by Adelaide immigrant Mirella Mancini, Maria was struck by discussions around women's roles outside of the home and began to wonder about what would happen to her once her children were grown. She heard about a TAFE course in traditional tailoring being run by Teresa Ricci. Maria enrolled and completed the course and went on to open her own sewing school, based from her Croydon home. Maria's course was popular, attracting students from as far away as Elizabeth. She specialised in teaching patternmaking so that students could learn to design their own clothes. By the late 1980s, Maria found that enrolments were waning due to the abundance of ready to wear clothing and also the easy availability of commercial patterns. She closed her business but continued to teach general sewing classes at the Brompton Community Centre until 1991. A natural people person, Maria also began volunteering with ANFE where she spent six years in the kitchen. She also volunteered at the Findon Community Centre, teaching sewing classes and was employed for a time, thanks to a government grant by CIC to also teach sewing classes in Payneham. Even though the grant was short-lived, Maria continued volunteering with CIC until Covid.

After Maria's experiences with the group who campaigned to save Croydon Primary School, at age sixty, Maria enrolled at Thebarton Senior College in a bid to improve her English. She matriculated in 2006, completing the necessary full five subjects including English and Carpentry. She is very proud of the fact that she was able to even obtain a university entry score. During this time, she also became a naturalized Australian citizen in order to be able to campaign for council elections, even for the role of Mayor. Maria admits that she became involved in fighting injustice wherever she saw it, especially where she felt the voice of the people was being ignored. Spurred by the fury of the injustice dealt her through the callous treatment and concealment of her first

child's burial, Maria was determined to speak up for the underdog and became involved as a protester for many decisions by a number of bodies when she found them to be unfair or elitist.

Maria also quietly continued her volunteer work. She served as a Justice of the Peace for ten years; she allows the committee of the Sant'Eufemia organization to meet in her home; she is a stalwart of her parish at Sacred Heart Church, Hindmarsh, and was especially active when the Italian mass was held there; she delivered Italian radio programs on stories of historical women of substance to encourage other women to have faith in their abilities; she sings for the OZ Italian Choir.

After all these years, a message she would like to make clear to all is the need for people not be judged by their outside appearances, but be treated with dignity and respect, no matter their background.

Maria is grateful that her husband, Rino, passed away peacefully at home, in her arms, after a long struggle with heart-related issues. Five years later, Maria's energy, inventiveness and mental acuity is evident in her eloquent speaking manner and her clear perspective on social and political issues. She continues to be a galvanizing force for her community.

In 2025, she was recognised by the Progetto Donna Committee run by Com.It.Es. (Adelaide), being granted the 'Corraggio Award' for her community initiatives.



# The Migration Story of Paolo (Paul) Battistella

## First Italo-Australian to set up a commercial dry-cleaning enterprise in South Australia and later in Victoria.

Paolo (Paul) Battistella was born on 28 April 1942 in the township of Fiannona Pola, Yugoslavia (now Croatia) in the middle of World War II. He is the eldest son of Olinto and Valentina Battistella (Nee Magri), with two younger brothers, Luciano (born in 1943) and Basilio (born in 1945).

Paul's grandfather, Vittorio, was born in Treviso in December 1886. His wife, Maria (Nee Tondat), was born in Udine in November 1893 and they had nine children.

Paul's father, Olinto, was the first born on 7th March 1914 at Pasiano Di Pordenone, P. Udine, Italy. Olinto was a carpenter by trade and married Valentina Magri in May 1941. Paul's family lived with his grandfather and their family in an old convent home in Traffe, Pordenone, sharing the house and communal land with forty other people. In 1938 Vittorio and his family were sent by the Fascist Government to look after a co-operative commune in Istria, a province of Venezia Giulia on the (disputed) border of Yugoslavia and Italy. He was an administrator of the Italian Agricultural of "Ente Tre Venezie". In 1939 war broke out and there were many uprisings in the area over the next few years of the war.

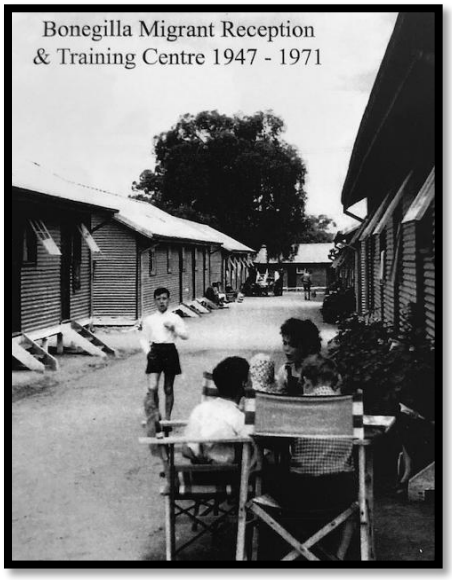
In 1943 when the Yugoslav Partisans gained control of the area, one evening the partisans entered the home of Vittorio with machine guns when the family was seated at the dinner table. They demanded to speak privately with Vittorio, Paul's grandfather. They went next door to his office while the family was ordered not to move from the table. The family waited for hours but Vittorio never returned. The family were afraid to go outside because they believed the house was surrounded by partisans with machine guns. However, when they did go outside, the courtyard was deserted. They waited all night, but Vittorio was never seen again. It was assumed he was killed by the partisans. Meanwhile, the partisans had cut all communications of the Commune with the outside world, and the next day a worker was sent on horseback to alert the Italian Army. The Italian Army arrived the following day with force to protect Vittorio's family and the Commune and demanded that the Partisans return Vittorio. When the partisans did not comply, the Army moved the family to Trieste. After a few months the family was resettled in Fossolon Di Grado, Northern Italy, with a home and land which they worked and farmed for the Government.

It was here that Paul completed his first 2 years of schooling. The family remained in Fossolon di Grado until 1949, when the Italian Government offered families the opportunity to immigrate to either Canada, Argentina or Australia. His father chose Australia because Paul's uncle Luigi, (who had been conscripted in the Army in 1939 and was taken prisoner of war in Tobruk), had heard from the Australian soldiers in North Africa that it was a great place to make a new home.

The Battistella family was transferred to Naples to the Italian migration camp, Bagnoli as displaced people. This is where the International Refugees Organisation (IRO) took control of families and arranged for transportation to foreign lands such as Australia.

In February 1950 after spending 6 months in Bagnoli, the family left on an ex-American Warship, the 'General Howze' from Naples. The journey took 30 days, arriving in Port Melbourne, Victoria. After the family was fully vetted by Customs authorities, they boarded a train overnight to the Government Migration Camp, Bonegilla in Northeast Victoria. On arrival the family was separated into different dormitories. Valentina and the 3 young boys slept in the women's dormitory, while Olinto was placed in the men's dormitory.

The migrant camps were set up as army-type barracks which were made of timber-framed corrugated iron walls and low pitched roofs. Each person was allocated a wire-based army cot, mattress, pillow, army blankets, sheets, locker, chair and eating utensils. Dining was in a separate communal building as were washing and toilet facilities.




The family remained in the camp for 9 months during which time the Government assisted Paul's father Olinto in finding employment as a carpenter. He worked for Spartan Paints in West Footscray as a maintenance carpenter. Once he was settled in the new job, the family moved into a rental property on Beaumont Parade, West Footscray. Paul and his two brothers were then sent to Star of the Sea Boarding School in Mornington for 9 months while Paul's mother worked at Smorgan & Co Cannery on the production line.

In 1952 Olinto and his brothers purchased a house in Waiora Parade, West Footscray, where everyone lived together. It was then that Paul and his two brothers returned from boarding school and continued their schooling at Corpus Christi Primary School. During his primary school years, Paul was heavily involved in football and athletics where he captained many sporting teams.


Pauls Uncles Siro, Valentino, Luigi and Severino
Paul's Parents Olinto and Valentina
Paul and brothers Basilio and Luciano

In 1953 Olinto found new employment at James Hardie and by saving his money, he was then able to purchase a new home in Drew Street, Yarraville, for his family. (Much later there was a new holiday house built at St. Leonards on the Bellarine Peninsula in Victoria).

Paul then attended Christian Brothers College (CBC) for Secondary school. During these secondary schooling years, he continued to play Australian Rules football. Paul was Captain of many sporting teams, including the Open Football Team for CBC, the combined swimming team and the Open Cricket Team. He also played turf Cricket for the Footscray District League Association as wicketkeeper and batsman.

In 1960, at the age of 18, Paul won the League's Best & Fairest for the Footscray District League Competition. He was then invited to join the Footscray Football Club (in the Victorian Football League) where he trained under Coach Ted Whitten and even played a few league games that year.

Paul continued playing football at VFL level and was offered to complete a four-year apprenticeship for Mechanical Engineering at Montgomery Engineers. During this time, he was also offered to complete an Engineering Time & Study course with Olympic General Products for 12 months.



Captain of the Under 18's Football Team
Paul seated (centre)

Paul fondly remembers his years in Drew Street, where he made many neighbourhood friends as well as his school friends from CBC, plus many close-knit mates from the footy club. To this day, he still keeps in contact with some of these friends and they came together for Paul's 80th birthday celebration in Adelaide in April 2022.

Paul met his future wife Bruna Amodeo when he travelled to Adelaide for the wedding of his uncle, Severino, in 1958. Bruna was the sister of his uncle's new wife, Antonietta Amodeo, so it was definitely kept in the family!

Bruna's mother, Giuseppina (Giuseppa) arrived in Australia in 1937 with her parents, Domenico Antonio Ielasi and Maria (nee Policano) on the liner "Esquilino". Domenico had been a butcher in their hometown of Careri, Calabria, but when they arrived in Adelaide, they went to stay with their son in Macclesfield, on a farm. However, when another son, Rosario arrived in 1938, they moved to Fredrick Street, Welland.

Giuseppa married Bruno in 1939 and lived with him on a market garden block on River Road, Lockleys, together with her parents. In 1945, Giuseppa and Bruno bought their first home with 5 acres of land on Days Road, Croydon Park, which became a market garden.

Paul's mother-in-law Giuseppa was a fiercely independent woman, raising three children on her own - having lost her husband, Bruno Amodeo, who died in 1950 when the youngest child was just 2 years old. To support the family Giuseppa worked for Tip Top Dry Cleaners. In 1958 she decided to start up her own small domestic dry cleaning business, which began in a small shed behind her house. Bruna worked in the business from when she was 14 years of age, doing everything from office work to pressing, sorting & running the front shop as well. Giuseppa also employed a few people to pick up and deliver clothing for dry cleaning. This was the beginning of what was to become Quality Dry Cleaners.

Paul's uncle and aunty built a new house next to Giuseppa's house. He worked for her in the fledgling domestic dry-cleaning business. He was able to expand the business by purchasing more machinery and obtaining more customers.

After his uncle's wedding, Paul stayed in Adelaide for two weeks to help build a fence at their new home. This is when he got to know Bruna well and they spent a lot of time together. Paul returned several times to Adelaide, and Bruna was able to visit him in Victoria over the years.

Paul and Bruna were engaged in October of 1964 and married in December that same year. (On the condition from his mother-in law, that he stayed in Adelaide). The wedding took place at St Francis of Assisi Church, Campbelltown (the old church which has now been renovated), followed by a Wedding Reception for 655 guests at the Windsor Ballroom in the city. They left for their honeymoon on New Years Day and travelled by ship to Europe, staying for 5 months. They have been happily married for 60 years.



Paul & Bruna married December 1965

When Paul and Bruna returned from their Honeymoon in mid-1965, they lived with Bruna's mother, Giuseppa, on Days Road at Croydon Park for several years. During this time the family started to grow, having 4 children in 6 years. They were then able to build their own house on the adjoining property, into which they moved in 1973. During this time, Paul's family began joining him in Adelaide, starting with his youngest brother Basilio who married Loretta Nardo in January 1967, followed by his parents a few years later. His parents sold both their houses in Victoria and settled in Trenton Terrace, Pooraka in 1975. Olinto died in 2001 at the age of 87, and Valentina in 2015 at the age of 92.

In 1965 Paul's work career in Adelaide began in the family domestic Dry Cleaning business, working with his uncle. Paul's qualification as a Mechanical Engineer was put to good use, as most dry-cleaning equipment involved electronic and mechanical components. Paul also had great business acumen and was a born salesman. He managed to expand the business rapidly. In 1967, Paul became a 50% shareholder of the Dry Cleaning business with his uncle.

Bruna kept working at the Dry Cleaning business for many years, deciding to leave the business in 1980 to have another child and focus on her family.

Under Paul's guidance, Quality Dry Cleaners, soon evolved into a large industrial and commercial dry cleaning business, partly due to the introduction of wash and wear garments on a domestic level; but also, due to Paul's realisation that there were hardly any industrial and commercial dry-cleaning businesses in Adelaide. His business acumen led to Quality Dry Cleaners (QDC) chasing and capturing this market.

The success of his industrial and commercial dry cleaning business (QDC) was in no small part due to Paul winning contracts with various appliance and motor vehicle companies, namely Mitsubishi and General Motors Holden. By offering dry cleaning of industrial leather gloves, overalls, shirts, and trousers as well as floor mat cleaning and rental agreements, QDC was in a league of their own at the time.

To cater for this volume of incoming work, in 1980 QDC purchased a 300kg Donini dry cleaning machine from Milan, Italy which was shipped to Adelaide. It was the first of its kind in the southern hemisphere. This machine now assisted in catering for the increased volume of work due to the large number of commercial contracts that Paul had signed up. There were now 35 staff members employed at QDC and Paul's workload had begun to increase immensely – particularly in sales and marketing. In his other role of Mechanical Engineer, he was also in charge of getting the machines up and running, as well performing the continued maintenance required.

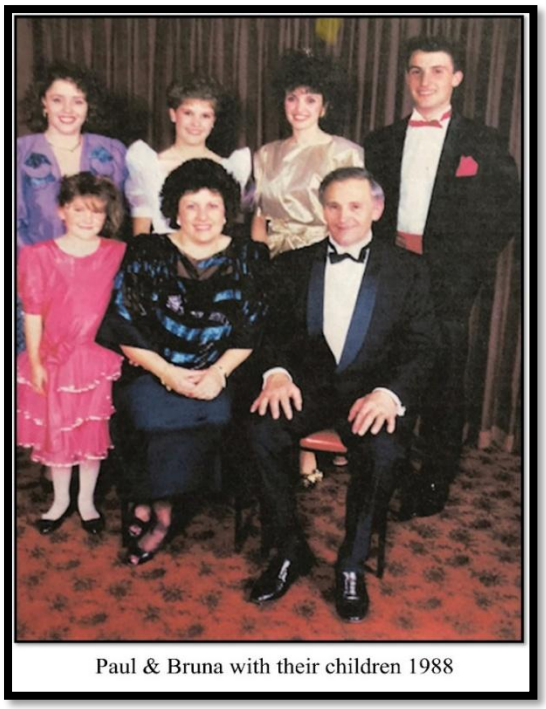
In 1985 Paul's uncle retired from the business as he was unwell, and Paul gained a new Partner in Quality Dry Cleaners. The subsequent injection of more capital allowed QDC to move from the large shed behind the residences at Croydon Park, to a 2000 square metre warehouse in Wingfield. From this space, 5000 kilograms of leather gloves per week were processed for the motor vehicle industry, as well as countless polo shirts, trousers and overalls for 900+ customers throughout the state – by this time, Paul had acquired BHP Whyalla as a customer.

Five years later Quality Dry Cleaners went national. Purchase was made of an existing industrial Dry Cleaning and Laundry business in Melbourne. QDC Victoria was now born and it soon had 11 shareholders and 75 employees. The premises in Adelaide was also transformed into a hazardous waste disposal site, where such materials were re-processed into safer items.

Around the same time that the business went national, Bruna returned to the workforce opening her first Gifts & Homewares retail shop on King William Road at Hyde Park.
A year later, she expanded to larger premises on Semaphore Road where she spent 9 years thoroughly enjoying the area and people, making many new friends. In 2000 she sold the business and travelled with Paul to Italy for the first time since their honeymoon.

After the expansion interstate Paul, on behalf of QDC, was able to invest heavily in two additional 300kg Firbimatic Dry Cleaning machines from Italy – one more for Adelaide and one for the premises in Melbourne. Paul and Bruna travelled to Italy to purchase the machines and while in Italy, took the opportunity to visit some of their family in Bologna and Torino.

After returning from overseas, Bruna started her new business as a Gift & Homewares Agent, travelling all over SA and Darwin, also spending some weeks in Melbourne. As her business started growing rapidly, a feature of her business was to host product showings at her home. It was here that Paul's salesman charm came to the fore, serving coffee and cake to the many customers that visited. They were a great team!



Paul & Bruna with their children 1988

In 2011 Bruna diversified from Gifts & Homewares to Fashion & Accessories. She attended many fashion fares in Sydney and Melbourne representing fashion importers over the coming years.

After 25 years on Days Road at Croydon Park, Paul and Bruna bought a gentleman's bungalow in Fergusson Square, Toorak Gardens in 1990. They spent the following 9 years investing time and money restoring it to its former glory. In 1999 they moved to West Lakes where they enjoyed lakeside living for 25 years. More recently they have downsized to a new home in Woodville West.

Having achieved so much in his career, Paul maintains that his greatest success is his family. The first child, Annalisa (Lisa) was born in 1967, followed by Joanne in 1969, Dianna in 1971, Paul Junior in 1972 and Carla in 1980.
During the 30 years of the children's schooling at St Dominic's Priory College and Blackfriars Priory School, Paul was prevalent on all school committees, coaching the school sporting teams

and also as a board member of these schools. His business acumen was appreciated by the schools and consequently he became President of the Parents & Friends Committee for many years at both schools.

Paul and Bruna are proud of their children and their achievements.

Lisa has worked in the Medical Imaging Industry for 30 plus years. She has 3 children, Alexandra, Victoria and Jack.

Joanne started in Banquet Sales & Marketing for International Hotel Groups before having her two children Chiara and Benjamin. She has been working in the Catholic Education System now for nearly 20 years.

Dianna's career started in Hospitality which has now led her to General Manager for a National Speciality Cheese Wholesale business based in Adelaide.

Paul studied carpentry and is now a registered builder with his own successful building company. He has two children, Sarah and Alex.

Carla's career started in Retail Management until she had her two children, Levi and Dion. She lives in Melbourne and is an accomplished Artist with her work in Galleries in Victoria and Queensland, as well as commissioned pieces in homes around the country and in London, UK.

Paul is also now the proud grandfather of 9 grandchildren and awaiting the day to become a great grandfather. He has always been heavily invested in his grandchildren and maintains close relationships with them. They appreciate all that he has to teach them and live by the motto that "if Nonno can't fix it, it simply can't be fixed!" Family dinners at this stage require a table seating 24.



Paul & Bruna today

Paul's love of travel has taken himself and Bruna around the world, and he has many memories of these travels, including those trips accompanied with his friends. He also cherishes the opportunities he has had to reconnect with family in and around Italy.

Paul retired in 2010 after 45 years in the Dry Cleaning industry and Bruna in 2022 after 22 years in the Gifts, Homewares & Fashion industry. They are living happily in retirement, hosting family dinners on a weekly basis, travelling interstate to see the grandchildren and spending time with extended family and friends.

Although technically retired, Paul's engineering background keeps him very busy coordinating many projects in and around his children's homes.

He likes to be involved in solving problems – claiming that his "Time & Study" degree allows him to fix just about anything!

Edited M. Russo

# The Hon. Mario Severino Feleppa OAM.

## The first Italo-Australian to enter the SA Legislative Council as a member of the Australian Labour Party.

Mario Severino Feleppa was born in Benevento (Italy) on the 3rd. July 1930, the fourth child of seven children to Antonio Feleppa and Assunta Viola.



Just after the end of World War 11, in 1946, the Monarchy under King Umberto 11 was replaced, via a referendum of June 2-3 1946 and Italy became a Republic, with a new Constitution. Political Parties were formed, with the Christian Democrat Party (DC) and Socialist Party (PSI) playing a key role with Prime Minister Alcide De Gaspari. Other parties were the Centralist Liberal Democratic Party (PDI) and the formidable Italian Socialist Party under Pietro Nenni.

Even as a teenager, Mario was interested in politics; at the age of 16, he joined the Social Democratic Party which was formed by the coalition of the Leftist Socialist Party (PSI) and the Communist Party (PCI). At this time, he also took up an apprenticeship with the large establishment called "Aeronautica Sannita". Eventually, already in Italy, he became involved in the plight of the workers where he worked, and was a "card carrying" member of the association that looked after the welfare and wages of workers in large institutions and workplaces. He eventually rose to the rank of the equivalent of a Shop Steward of the relevant Union.

In 1955, Mario won a traineeship of technical industries for people wanting to emigrate, and at the completion of the course, he prepared to emigrate to Australia. In March 1956, Mario arrived in Melbourne aboard the liner "*Fairsea"*. As with most immigrants, he was taken, by train to a settlement camp at Bonegilla. There were more than 600 people just like him in Bonegilla, and the accommodation was in Nissen Huts or wooden cabins, and food was rather strange, according to him, consisting of mainly rice and tomatoes. As he had no desire to remain there for up to 18 months, until a job was found for him.

On the fourth day, while shopping in the nearby town, he boarded a train that took him to Adelaide Railway station. Apparently, he walked out of the train station and came up to Parliament House, and by chance he met someone who was also Italian and this person took him to a guest house to sleep. The owner of this guest house took Mario in and gave him a bed. He was an Italian, called Guerino Cutillo, who was also from a village close to Benevento. Guerino told Mario where he could find work. There were many industries along South Road looking for workers. Mario was a toolmaker in Italy, and he had the paperwork to prove it, so he had no problem getting a job,

even though he only knew a few words in English.

Soon Mario called his two friends from Bonegilla to come to Adelaide and the three found a room with three beds and a stove. The three lived there for some time, sharing the chores. The other two also got jobs, one as a welder, and the other at the Electricity Trust.

Mario soon changed jobs, working on Greenhill Road, which was six kilometres away from his home, and he rode a bicycle, which he had bought, to his new work each day. After this job, he had several more, accumulating money to put down a deposit for a house, which he bought in Threefall Street, Norwood. He took out three mortgages and worked long hours to pay for it.

Mario had known a girl in Italy, called Pia, and he had proposed to her before he left. After he had bought the house, Mario married Pia by proxy, and she arrived in Adelaide in late 1957 to be with him. They had two children, Tina who was born in May 1958 and Joe who was born in August 1963.

Mario's wish to enter Parliament was perhaps instigated in 1958 when he lived in Norwood, at 28 years of age and not long after having arrived in Adelaide. It was a hot summer's day and next door was a vacant allotment which stabled horses. They brought flies and the smell of dung to his nostrils, not to mention the noise made by their hooves as they struck the tin fence. Despite the heat, he and his pregnant wife had to stay indoors because of the animals next door. Mario decided to complain to the Council. He did this several times, but with no results. Then he found out that the owner of the vacant allotment was friends with the Town Clerk. He decided then that he would have to fight for the people against what he then had thought was the hypocrisy of law makers.

Mario worked at the Caroma factory and at the Engineering and Water Supply. In these places, he became involved in the Workers Union. He had been involved in the equivalent of Trade Unions from Italy, and here in Australia he also became involved in the welfare of the workers, through the membership of the Amalgamated Workers and Shipwright Union. Once at Caroma there was a workers' strike organised by the Union, which who wanted better pay and conditions and the Caroma Management threatened to have other workers come in to do the work. The Union leader wanted to involve other Unions, such as the Transport Union, in the fray. Eventually, Mario, as a representative of the Union, talked with the Caroma Management and he was able to negotiate the best compromise solution for both parties. He used this consultative approach many time after, ensuring that he was neither the enemy of the management nor or the workers.

A few years after he arrived in Adelaide, when Mario worked in larger organisations, he became a member of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), the equivalent of the party he had joined in Italy. He soon was a veteran of campaign trails and Party conventions, fund raising through barbecues and dinners. He helped the Italian Community to understand politics, and vote for the ALP and especially for Don Dunstan, who became the Labor Premier, first in June 1967-1968 and then in June 1970-79.

Mario also had desires to enter the political arena, to make a difference both socially and politically.

In 1978 he was the Foundation member, Secretary and Treasurer of the Campbelltown Labor Party Sub-branch with the role to facilitate the involvement of Italian speaking constituents in Branch activities.

Mario liked helping others, especially with employment and migration issues. He soon became the person to go to for the resolution of any political and social issues of the ethnic communities. He even paid for food hampers for the needy or paid for the fees to bring migrants from overseas to join their family members, and he assisted with migrant application requirements. He worked relentlessly since 1966 for the betterment of the entire community, and especially the South Australian Italian Community, in the areas of social justice and community welfare.

Before that, he was engaged in many community activities. In 1966-72 he was treasurer and member of the Good Neighbour Council. In 1973-76 he was a Foundation Member of the first Campbelltown Community Council for Social Development, a convenor of the Youth sub-committee for the Council of Social Development and President of the Migrants' Issues sub-committee.

In 1974-6, while still working at the Caroma factory, he was allowed by the Managing Director, to be a volunteer interpreter and community aide for the Department of Community Welfare, often carrying out volunteer community work.

In 1978-81 he was a Convenor and member of the Italian Co-ordinating Committee for Social and Cultural Development and from 1974 to 1990, he was President and member of the Federal Committee of Patronata INCA, helping the Italian migrants. For many years, he also helped the work of APIA, assisting the elderly Italo-Australians. This meant helping with obtaining Government grants, for accommodation in elderly care, recreation programmes and Mensa for the aged in the local community.

Mario Feleppa was elected to the Legislative Council on June 1982, and only retired in October 1995, because of the ill health of his wife, Pia. As a Member of the State Legislative Council, Mario Feleppa worked on various committees, including being Chairman of the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation, Legislation Review Committee, Member of the Child Protection Parliamentary Committee and Member of the Ethnic Affairs State Platform Committee.

His main interests in the time he was in the Legislative Council were community involvement and representation. Possibly the greatest disagreement he had with his fellow parliamentary members was the disagreement on Poker Machine legislation. He agreed with the legislation, as a lot of South Australians were travelling across the state border to play there, but he wanted much stricter controls to avoid criminal interference and corruption. He also wanted the Lotteries Commission to manage the programme. There were many hours of discussions between himself, the relevant Minister and the Premier to resolve their differences.

In June 1980, Mario Feleppa was given the Medal of the Order of Australia (OMA) in recognition of his service in the field of migrant welfare. In 2001, Mario was awarded the Federal Centenary Medal in recognition of his service to the Australian Italian community.

In 2003, Mario was also responsible for establishing “Co.As.It.” in Adelaide, an organisation that still today run activities to make sure people can age gracefully, providing culturally sensitive and appropriate services to people in their elderly years.

For many decades, Mario Feleppa was a Justice of the Peace, serving his local community.

Mario is highly respected by all members of the South Australian community, of all political persuasions, and certainly very highly respected in the Italian Australian community.





Edited by: Mario Russo



# The Hon. Carmel Zollo

## “Set a goal. Be confident in it and follow through,…

## The first Italian born Minister and Member of the South Australian Legislative Council (from 1997 to 2014)

Carmelina (Carmel) Zollo (nee: Russo), was born in the town of Tufara, in the Province of Campania, in January 1952. She was the younger sister to Liliana. Their parents were Antonio (Tonino) Russo (who was one of nine brothers) and Mariantonia (Maria) Russo (nee: Pisaniello). It appears that their family home in Italy had historically been a monastery and a Roman respite point along the Via Appia.

Just after Carmel was born, her father Tonino migrated to Adelaide, South Australia, having been sponsored by other families who had previously emigrated to Adelaide from the same locality in Italy and with whom Tonino had kept in touch. He in turn also later sponsored and provided a home for other relatives. Upon arrival in Adelaide, Tonino stayed with friends and relatives in the Campbelltown area and found work in the nearby market gardens of the River Torrens. Subsequently he found work in the Engineering and Water Supply (E&WS), now called SA Water, where he worked on the construction of the Mannum to Adelaide water pipeline. After some years he was able to buy a house in Harcourt Road, Payneham and in 1957 was able to bring his family out from Italy to Adelaide, when Carmel was five years old. Tonino then transferred to work as a machinist at the Kent Town E&WS Depot. (Tonino died aged 77 in 1992 and Maria died in 2008, aged 80).

Carmel, her sister and mother made the month-long sea voyage to Australia via one of the many passenger liners used to bring thousands of European migrants in the fifties and sixties departing firstly from Naples to the port of Fremantle and then onto Melbourne, where her father was waiting for them to take them on the Overland train to the family home in Payneham. The only memory of the voyage Carmel has is how seasick she was on the ship, as it traversed heavy seas and bad weather on the Indian Ocean.

Upon arrival, the mother, Maria, soon found work in various manual jobs, including as a cleaner at the (old) Royal Adelaide Hospital. Meanwhile, Carmel and her sister started school at the Wellington Road Primary School (now the Trinity Gardens Primary School) and together with many other migrant children, had to quickly adopt English as their new “mother” tongue and integrate into their new community. They were also expected to help their parents and wider family members with English interpreting and translating and liaising with government agencies, doctors, employers etc. at such a young age.

As expected by her parents and peers (but not her teachers, who saw her potential to go on to further secondary and tertiary studies), Carmel took a Commercial course in High School and won a scholarship to go on and do Year 11.

Carmel started work at Elder Smith Goldsborough Mort (ESGM), and her employers were quick to appreciate her potential and encouraged her to enrol in the South Australian Institute of Technology (later the University of South Australia and now the Adelaide University). However,

because of changed family circumstances, Carmel could not take this offer at the time.

In 1973 Carmel married Lou (Luigi) Zollo who's family had also migrated in the fifties from a nearby village (Zolli) in Italy, although the couple met in Adelaide. Lou's parents were Alfredo and Maria Luisa Zollo, who lived in Hectorville at the time. (Alfredo died in 2001, aged nearly 80 years and Luisa died in 2015, aged 92).

Lou had just completed his Bachelor of Arts Degree, majoring in politics and history and became a Federal and later State Public Servant, as well as spending several years as a Ministerial Advisor in the Bannon Government. Carmel shared his strong sense of justice and political involvement.

The newly-weds moved into a house in Paradise and started a family, having three children, Alfred, Steven and Dianna. (who were all born in the newly-built North Eastern Community Hospital). The family moved to another house in Athelstone in 1986.



When Carmel married, she left ESGM and joined the Commonwealth Public Service in the Department of Veteran Affairs and later the Department of Defence. When her children were born, in the 1970's, she took (the newly available) maternity leave and became more involved in politics, first doing relief work in Electoral Offices, for both State and Federal MPs and later as a full-time staffer.

In the mid-nineties Carmel was endorsed to run for the Upper House (Legislative Council) as a candidate for the Labor Party and was elected to the South Australian Parliament (Legislative Council) in October 1997. She was the first Italian-born woman elected to the South Australian Legislative Council and remained a member of Parliament until retiring in 2014. From 2005 to 2009, under the Rann State Labour Government, Carmel was appointed the first Italian-born Cabinet Minister.

Carmel does not remember any fuss made of her “firsts”. She insists that “one simply got on with it and worked hard.” She immersed herself in both legislation and community representation. As a Legislative Councillor, she represented the whole State and prior to becoming a Minister she “shadowed” the then electorate of Goyder, encompassing the Yorke Peninsula. She worked hard and was respected by her colleagues and the people she helped. She remembers the difficult time in Parliament during the sale (long term lease of our electricity asset) with passions running high and the many late nights of Parliamentary sittings around the sale. Parliamentary life was always interesting and sometimes a surprise, like learning from her media adviser on becoming a Minister that the first question the media would pose to her was which football team she supported!

In her parliamentary career, Carmel was a Minister in a diverse number of Portfolios, including Emergency Services and Correctional Services, becoming a Minister just after the January 2005 catastrophic Eyre Peninsula bushfires that resulted in the death of nine people, many injuries and

the destruction of property and land. Following comprehensive reviews and inquiries, the Emergency Services were allocated large increases in equipment and training. As Minister for the Country Fire Services and the State Emergency Services, she has many fond memories of country South Australia and its communities. The hard work of so many passionate volunteers who put their lives on the line is something that will stay with her, she says.

Carmel was also South Australia's first dedicated Minister for Road Safety in 2008, overseeing the then State's lowest road toll in 2008. With no magic bullet to eliminate our road toll and serious injuries, Carmel worked with stakeholders around the same table: MAC, police, transport and advertising. She also learnt that nearly everyone is an expert in Road Safety! She was also the Minister assisting the Minister of Industry and Trade, the Minister assisting the Minister of Regional Health, and in the 2005 Cabinet reshuffle, Premier Mike Rann gave her the Portfolio of Minister for Mental Health and Substance Abuse and Minister assisting the Minister of Regional Health. In that role Carmel championed the need for greater support in these important areas affecting many people's lives.

Prior to becoming a Minister, her Parliamentary roles included Government Whip in the Legislative Council, Parliamentary Secretary (Assistant Minister) to the Minister for Industry and Trade and Mineral Resources Development. She also convened the Premier's Food Council and was a Member of the Premier's Wine Council. She served on several Standing Committees and Select Committees. Just prior to her retirement, she chaired the Statutory Authorities Review Committee and the Social Development Committee.

Not long after being elected in Parliament, she was instrumental in helping with government funding of the foundation and website of the "Australian Donna", which is a forum for the advancement of Italo-Australian women. In 2025, whilst being interviewed as part of her recognition for *The Women of Campbelltown*, Carmel said she "felt privileged to have been a Member of Parliament and the opportunities this provided to support many individuals and community groups, as well as contribute to policy and legislation which ultimately make a difference to the quality of people's lives."

As an Italo-Australian, Carmel was involved with and attended many Italian Clubs and Associations functions. She always appreciated the amount of time and work volunteers gave to ensure their success. She acknowledges that whilst Italo-Australian associations and clubs are evolving to bring in the younger generations and the wider community, their focus has not changed, to celebrate, acknowledge and support Italian culture. The importance of seeing the Italian language taught and thrive is also important. After some 70 years of the major Italian migration story, Italo-Australian's successes are well embedded in all aspects of Australian life.



During her Parliamentary career, Carmel took part in several Ministerial visits to Italy, including one with Onorevole Clemente Mastella, the then Minister for Justice in the Italian Government. On. Mastella was also the Mayor of Ceppaloni at that time, and she was welcomed and hosted in the Municipality of Ceppaloni and took part in meetings and discussions. For Carmel and the many other close relatives who attended the reception, it was an emotional return to the community of her birth.

Carmel was also able to visit several other Ministers in the Campania Regional Government including with the On. Rosa D'Amelio. Meetings and discussions in the areas of Emergency Services and Road Safety were facilitated by the Consul of Italy in South Australia, with the Regione Campania ensuring all appointments were well executed and informative.

Carmel was particularly pleased to have been involved on one of her visits in promoting the "Nonni/Nipoti" project, where she met with Assessore Alfonsina De Felice of the Regione Campania. The idea was promoted by the Campania Club in South Australia and saw the exchange of young people having the opportunity to visit the Campania region, to further learn and strengthen their Italian heritage from those with life-long experiences.

Carmel also had the opportunity during her career to host many other Italian delegations from Italy to South Australia. She was also pleased to have supported the Working Holiday Visa Agreement at the Parliamentary and community level. Italy was one of the countries initially not part of the scheme. It is now a great success with many Italian young people exploring Australia whilst travelling under the scheme.

Carmel Zollo retired from political life in 2014, after over 16 years in Parliament, including four years as a Minister. As a result of that service, she was authorised to retain the honorific title of Honourable (Hon) for life. She has also been a Justice of the Peace for over 40 years.

Since retirement, she has served on the Boards of the Home Start Finance, (a South Australian Government initiative established in 1989 to assist individuals, especially for first home buyers, in achieving ownership by offering a range of low-deposit housing loans and without the requirement of paying for Lenders Mortgage Insurance), and the History Trust of South Australia (which was formed in 1981 as a statutory corporation to safeguard South Australia's heritage and encourage research and public presentation of South Australia's history through grants to community projects and events. It also operates three museums and a Centre of Democracy).

Carmel and her husband have lived in the Campbelltown Council area for over 50 years and enjoy the Council's diverse areas of plains and foothills, greenery of parks and gardens and a sense of community. Carmen enjoys the community involvement of the Campbelltown Council and their focus on open space and promotion of food producers in the Council area.

Lou has also continued as a volunteer driver with "Nonna's Cucina" for over 16 years and in 2025 was awarded the Aged Care Volunteer of the Year from COASIT, a role he hopes he can continue to do for many more years.

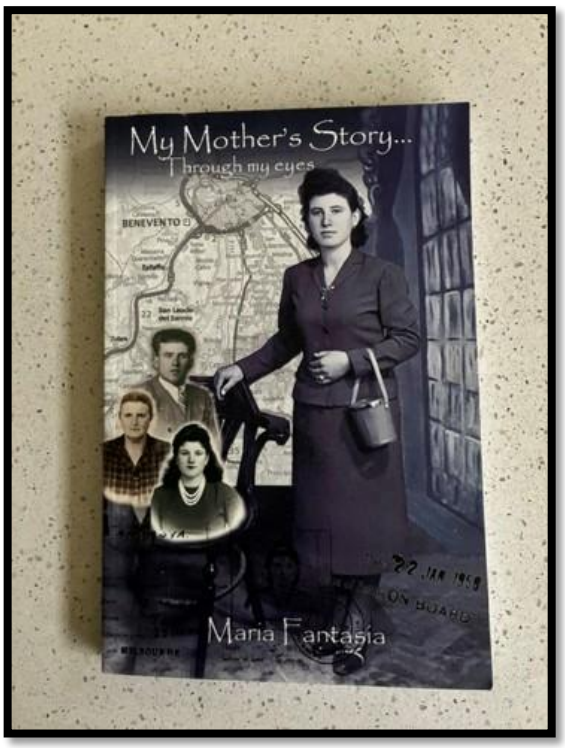
Today Carmel is very involved with her grandchildren and has undertaken a number of courses in the arts and history, as well as other hobbies. Her advice to all young people, especially women, is: “Set a goal. Be confident in it and follow through,… but always ask for help when you need it and thus achieve your ambitions.”



Edited by Mario Russo

# Review of the Books by Maria Fantasia About Her Mother and Father.

Maria Fantasia wrote two books about her parents. The first book, titled “My Mother's Story... through my eyes” was written in 2019. It is a poignant account of her mother, Angela, who was born in a small village in Italy and of the post war impact on her family. Not being able to marry the love of her life, Angela was captivated by a photo and loving letters of a man overseas. Wanting a better life, she decided to marry (by proxy) this man, called Francesco, and she emigrated to South Australia in 1957. She was only 20 years old.

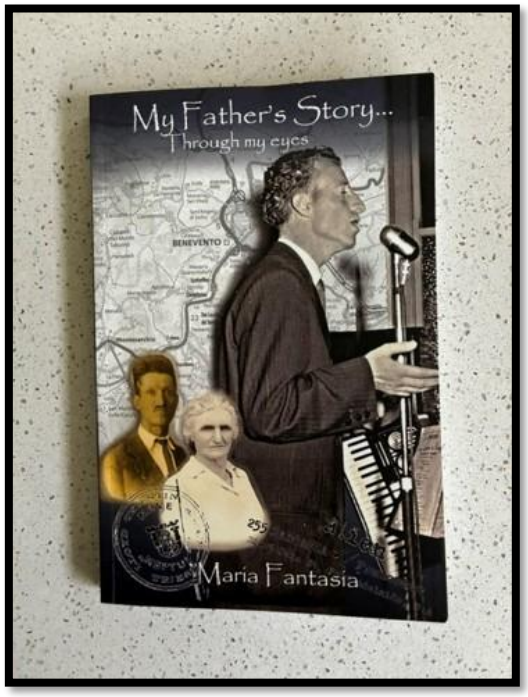



However, right from the first day that she met him, Angela found that Francesco was domineering, aggressive and violent to her and later to her many children. Her life became miserable and full of fear, but she was determined to stand up (in her own way) to this man and protect her children as best she could from him. She was also afflicted by the death of a child in infancy and physical health issues, having to undergo many operations, which did not help her mental health. The interference of her mother-in-law did not help either. The husband's immediate family did little to help her plight. However, as Angela's husband became older and increasingly sick, she took care of him. After he died, she felt quite lost as she had never experienced autonomy or independence before.

It was only later in Angela's life that she opened up to the author, Maria, who, while growing up, had become a rebellious child and a “disappointing” person, according to her father's standards. The author's mother told her of the intimate secrets of her husband's actions only just before she died. Only then did Maria become aware of all her mother's horrific ordeals, especially with the husband, her father. This made Maria, the so-called wayward daughter, realise why she herself was so defiant. She felt much love for her mother and at the same time felt heart-wrenching pain for what her mother had suffered.

The author decided to delve into her mother's life (and at the same time her father's life) by talking with her relatives in Australia and in Italy after her mother's death. She wrote this book as a loving homage to her mother. It is a story of how one person can create such misery and fear by his actions in relation to his family, while appearing as a laughing, jovial person to others. At the same time the author developed a hatred of her father's actions and their ramifications on the whole family. But it is also a love story of a mother for her children and the author's love of her mother. The book is a loving homily to her mother and a condemnation of her father's actions.

In 2021 Maria Fantasia decided to write a second book about her father, Francesco, titled “My Father's Story...through my eyes” in which she describes her father's life in his birth country, Italy and later in his new country of Australia. She describes his difficulties in finding any job to make money, his failed enterprises and therefore his difficulty in what he believed was his obligation, to put a roof over his family's head and food on the table. More so is the effect that his quick mood-swing personality had on his wife, his family and those around him. Also, the way he treated his young children, making them work so hard in the family building business or in the fishing business while quite young and having no regard for their safety while doing so. However, he could be at times, a gentle father and later, he was a most loving grandfather.




He was a charismatic man to others but a “monster” with swinging moods to his family, trying to control and dominate them with fear and physical harm and causing psychological harm as well. This was a time when help from this type of abuse was non-existent and others turned a blind eye to what was happening within the family.

The author, Maria, delves more deeply, almost as a cathartic journey of trying to understand psychologically why her father behaved as he did. She has shown this in the book, clinically unravelling his psyche to try to understand him better, while not condoning in anyway his abominable actions. She tries to understand (through meticulous research) if it was the mores of his society and his familial upbringing, the loss of his father at an early age, his mother's influence, the surrounding circumstances of poverty or a combination of all these factors. Or was it also something deeper within himself that needed to make him a master of his household? After all, his brother was not the same as him. In writing this story, the author, Maria, came to understand herself, as to why she behaved as she had done throughout in her life and then to be able to move forward with her own life.

This story is very dark, sad and poignant, but also heart-warming, as the reader finds total empathy for the author.

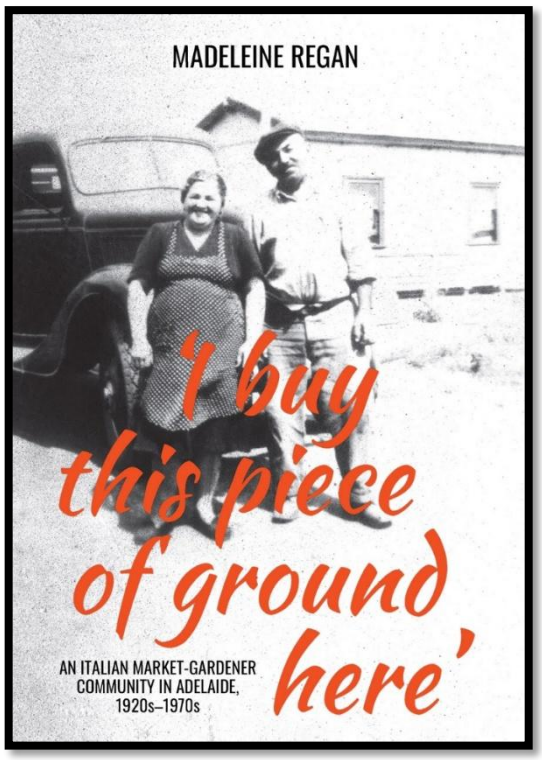
Both books are written from the heart as the reader discovers not only the characters of a family, their trials and tribulations, but also a journey of redemption for the author. The reader feels the pain and suffering with the author, but also the understanding of why she felt she had to go down this “rabbit-hole” of a journey, and how she emerged from the darkness to the light of understanding and empowerment of herself.

The books are a “must read” for anyone who has suffered physical and psychological pain or seen someone else go through this ordeal, because it may give them some comfort in reading how someone else, who also went through this ordeal, managed to understand and overcome their own turmoil in life.

Mario Russo

# I Buy this Piece of Ground Here: An Italian Market Gardener Community in Adelaide, 1920s–1970s

## Madeleine Regan




### Introduction

Madeleine Regan's *I buy this piece of ground here: An Italian Market-Gardener Community in Adelaide, 1920s–1970s* examines the experiences of Italian migrants from the Veneto region who settled in Adelaide's western suburbs between the 1920s and 1970s. Drawing on oral histories, archival records, photographs, and government documents, Regan explores how these migrants established successful market gardens while building close-knit communities and preserving their cultural heritage. The book contributes significantly to South Australian history by documenting a community whose role in the state's agricultural and multicultural development has often been overlooked.

### Overview and Argument

Regan argues that the Veneto market gardeners contributed far more than fresh produce to South Australia. Through hard work, family cooperation, and strong community networks, they created a thriving agricultural community that shaped both the local economy and the social fabric of Adelaide. The book demonstrates that land ownership represented security, independence, and belonging for migrants who had left rural Italy in search of a better future. Rather than presenting migration as a single event, Regan shows it as a long process of adaptation, resilience, and identity formation. By focusing on the everyday experiences of ordinary families, she challenges traditional migration histories that emphasise government policy over personal experience.

### Strengths

One of the book's greatest strengths is its use of oral history. Interviews with first- and second-generation Italian Australians provide authentic and personal perspectives that bring the historical narrative to life. Regan effectively combines these memories with archival sources, creating a well-balanced and reliable account of the community's development.

The book also fills an important gap in Australian migration history by focusing on pre-Second World War Italian migration, an area that has received less scholarly attention than the post-war migration period. Regan's accessible writing style, careful historical research, and thoughtful integration of photographs, maps, and family records make the book valuable to both academic and general audiences. Her emphasis on ordinary people, family life, and local history highlights the significant contribution of Italian migrants to South Australia's agricultural and cultural development.

## Themes

Several important themes emerge throughout the book, the most significant being land ownership, family, community, resilience, cultural identity, discrimination, and generational change. Regan demonstrates that owning land symbolised stability, independence, and the fulfilment of migrants' aspirations, while market gardening became central to both their livelihoods and identities.

Family is presented as the foundation of the community, with every member contributing to the success of the market gardens. Regan also highlights the often-overlooked role of women, showing that their labour and support were essential to both the family business and the preservation of cultural traditions. Strong community networks based on kinship, shared regional origins, and mutual assistance enabled new migrants to overcome the challenges of settlement and establish successful lives in Australia.

The book also explores the hardships experienced by the community, including economic difficulties, demanding physical labour, and discrimination during the Second World War. Despite these challenges, the migrants displayed remarkable resilience and adaptability. Regan further examines how younger generations gradually pursued education and careers beyond agriculture while maintaining connections to their Italian heritage. Through these interconnected themes, the book demonstrates that migration involves not only physical movement but also the creation of new identities, communities, and a lasting sense of belonging.

## Scope and Perspective

While exceptionally well researched, the book does not seek to present a comprehensive account of the Italian Australian experience. Rather, its strength lies in its focused examination of migrants from the Veneto region and their descendants. This regional lens allows Madeleine Regan to explore in considerable depth the migration journeys, settlement patterns, family networks, and community institutions that shaped their lives in South Australia. In doing so, the book highlights the diversity that exists within the broader Italian Australian experience, recognising that migrants from different regions often followed distinct pathways and encountered different circumstances.

The book draws extensively on oral histories, providing rich personal insights that bring the narrative to life and preserve voices that might otherwise be lost. While personal recollections are inevitably shaped by the passage of time, Regan reinforces these accounts through extensive documentary research, creating a balanced and well-substantiated historical record. The

combination of oral testimony and archival evidence is one of the work's particular strengths, ensuring that both historical facts and lived experiences are preserved for future generations.

The book's primary emphasis is on documenting and celebrating the lives, experiences, and achievements of the Veneto community rather than engaging extensively with broader migration theory or exploring internal community tensions. This is best understood as a deliberate choice of focus rather than a shortcoming. By placing individual and family stories at the centre of the narrative, Regan has produced a detailed and valuable community history that captures an important chapter in South Australia's multicultural heritage.

## Conclusion

*I Buy This Piece of Ground Here* is an important contribution to Australian migration history and South Australian local history. Through a skilful combination of oral testimony and historical research, Madeleine Regan preserves the experiences of Veneto market gardeners while demonstrating their lasting influence on the state's agricultural, economic, social, and multicultural development.

The book succeeds in showing that migration history is shaped not only by major political and historical events, but also by the everyday experiences of ordinary families. Its exploration of identity, resilience, community, and belonging extends well beyond the Veneto experience and offers valuable insights into the broader story of migration in Australia.

As both a scholarly study and a tribute to a pioneering community, Regan's work is a highly recommended resource for historians, students, and anyone interested in South Australia's multicultural heritage. More importantly, it stands as a testament to the value of preserving community memory, ensuring that the stories, sacrifices, and achievements of one generation remain accessible to those who follow.

Rosemarie Geracitano

# Trieste Goes to Australia

# By Gianfranco Cresciani




## Introduction

Gianfranco Cresciani's *Trieste Goes to Australia* explores the migration of approximately 20,000 people from Trieste to Australia between 1954 and 1961. Unlike many Italian migrants who came to Australia primarily for economic opportunities, the Triestini were largely influenced by the political uncertainty surrounding the future of the Free Territory of Trieste after the Second World War. Drawing on oral histories, archival research, government records, photographs, and personal documents, Cresciani presents a detailed account of how international political events shaped the lives of ordinary people. The book makes an important contribution to Australian migration history by highlighting a unique migration experience that has often been overlooked within broader studies of Italian migration.

## Overview and Argument

Cresciani argues that the migration of the Triestini cannot be explained by economic factors alone. Instead, he demonstrates that political instability, uncertainty about citizenship, and the changing status of Trieste after the Second World War were central reasons why many families chose to migrate. The book explains how the transition from Allied administration to Italian control created insecurity for many residents, particularly those employed by the Allied Military Government.

The author also argues that migration was a complex process that continued long after arrival in Australia. Settlement involved adapting to a new society while maintaining strong emotional and cultural ties to Trieste. Through personal testimonies and historical analysis, Cresciani shows that migration was not simply about relocating to another country but about rebuilding lives, identities, and communities. By connecting international political events with individual experiences, the book broadens traditional understandings of post-war migration and demonstrates how global events can shape personal decisions.

## Strengths

One of the book's greatest strengths is Cresciani's use of oral history. Interviews with first-generation migrants provide authentic accounts of the challenges and opportunities they experienced before and after migration. These personal stories add emotional depth to the historical narrative while preserving the memories of a generation whose experiences might otherwise have been lost.

The book is also strengthened by its extensive use of archival sources, including government documents, official records, photographs, and community publications. Cresciani carefully combines these sources with oral testimony, creating a well-researched and balanced historical account.

Another important strength is the book's ability to explain the complex political history of Trieste in a clear and accessible way. Cresciani successfully demonstrates how the Cold War, the Free Territory of Trieste, and international diplomacy influenced migration decisions. His discussion of settlement in Australia also highlights the important role of community organisations in helping migrants adapt while preserving their cultural identity. The accessible writing style makes the book valuable to historians, students, and general readers alike.

## Themes

The dominant theme throughout the book is identity. Cresciani shows that the Triestini possessed a unique regional identity shaped by Trieste's complex political history. Many migrants identified not only as Italians but also as Triestini, and this strong sense of regional identity continued after migration to Australia.

Another major theme is political uncertainty and displacement. Unlike many other migrant groups, the Triestini were strongly influenced by international political developments rather than purely economic hardship. The uncertainty surrounding Trieste's future encouraged many families to seek greater stability in Australia.

Family and community also feature prominently throughout the book. Cresciani demonstrates that family networks and community organisations played a vital role in supporting migrants during settlement. These organisations preserved language, traditions, and cultural identity while assisting newcomers to establish successful lives in Australia.

The themes of resilience and adaptation are equally important. Despite the challenges of migration, homesickness, and cultural adjustment, the Triestini successfully established themselves within Australian society while maintaining pride in their heritage. Cresciani argues that preserving cultural traditions and integrating into Australian society were complementary rather than conflicting processes.

Finally, the book explores memory and belonging. Through oral histories, Cresciani demonstrates that migrants maintained strong emotional connections to Trieste while gradually developing a sense of belonging in Australia. Their experiences illustrate that migration is not simply a physical journey but also a lifelong process of negotiating identity, culture, and place.

## Areas for Further Exploration

Although the book is thoroughly researched, its narrow focus on the Triestine community means that its findings cannot be applied to all Italian migrants in Australia. Other regional groups experienced migration under different social, economic, and political circumstances.

The reliance on oral history also presents some challenges, as personal memories can be selective and influenced by the passage of time. Cresciani addresses this by supporting interview evidence with archival sources, although oral testimony remains inherently subjective.

Additionally, the book focuses primarily on successful settlement experiences and pays less attention to migrants who may have struggled or returned to Europe. Greater discussion of these experiences would have provided a broader picture of migration outcomes. Similarly, more engagement with migration theory may have strengthened the book's contribution to wider academic debates.

## Conclusion

*Trieste Goes to Australia* is a significant contribution to Australian migration history and one of the most comprehensive studies of the Triestine migration to Australia. Through the integration of oral histories, archival research, and political analysis, Gianfranco Cresciani demonstrates how international events shaped the lives of ordinary migrants and influenced the development of Australia's multicultural society.

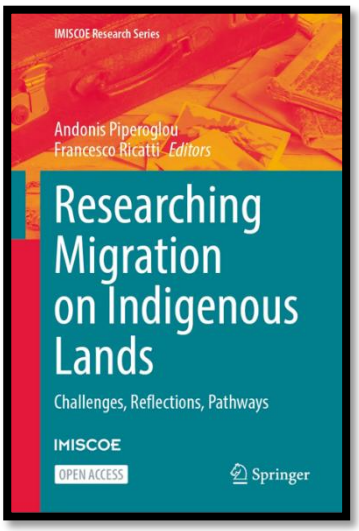
The book successfully shows that migration is influenced by political uncertainty, identity, family, and community as much as by economic opportunity. Its exploration of belonging, resilience, and cultural preservation provides valuable insight into the migrant experience while preserving the memories of a unique Italian Australian community.

Overall, *Trieste Goes to Australia* is both a scholarly study and an important work of community history. It offers readers a deeper understanding of the relationship between migration, politics, and identity and makes a lasting contribution to the study of Italian migration and Australia's multicultural heritage.

Rosemarie Geracitano

# Researching Migration on Indigenous Lands: Challenges, Reflections, Pathways

## By Andonis Piperoglou and Francesco Ricatti




### Introduction

*Researching Migration on Indigenous Lands: Challenges, Reflections, Pathways* is an ambitious interdisciplinary edited volume that asks readers to reconsider a central assumption in Australian migration studies: that migration can be understood primarily through migrants' relationships with the Australian nation-state. The volume instead begins from the recognition that migration to Australia has always occurred on Indigenous lands and therefore cannot be separated from Indigenous sovereignty, dispossession and the continuing structures of settler colonialism.

This intervention is particularly significant because Australian multiculturalism is often narrated through stories of hardship, adaptation, contribution and eventual belonging. The contributors do not deny migrants' experiences of racism, exclusion or marginalisation. Rather, they expand the historical frame by asking what remains unseen when migrant settlement is discussed without recognising the peoples whose Country migrants entered and, on whose lands, they established homes, livelihoods and communities.

The collection's central tension is therefore both intellectually demanding and ethically important: people may experience oppression within a settler-colonial society while also benefiting from, participating in or becoming implicated in its structures. Instead of classifying migrants simply as either victims or colonisers, the book explores the complexity of these overlapping positions.

### Purpose and Central Argument

The volume brings migration studies into sustained dialogue with Indigenous sovereignty and settler-colonial scholarship. Piperoglou and Ricatti argue that accounts of migration have often celebrated diversity and migrants' contributions while giving insufficient attention to the fact that the Australian continent was already home to deeply storied Indigenous societies whose sovereignty was never ceded. The collection consequently develops anticolonial, antiracist, decolonial and Indigenous approaches to migration research.

Debbie Bargallie's foreword establishes the ethical direction of the book. Researchers are asked to recognise their own positions and responsibilities within settler colonial structures and to move beyond critique towards scholarship grounded in responsibility, humility, reciprocity and relationality. This is one of the collection's most important contributions. The question is not merely whether researchers offer an Acknowledgement of Country, but whether recognition of Indigenous sovereignty changes how research is conceived, conducted, interpreted and shared.

From this perspective, research is not a neutral exercise. The choices scholars make about questions, methods, evidence and authority influence whose knowledge is recognised and whose experiences are marginalised. That proposition provides the ethical foundation for the volume.

## Structure and Interdisciplinary Scope

The book contains a foreword, an extensive introduction, a series of chapters and three Undisciplined Afterwords. Its contributors examine migrant identity and Indigenous heritage, migration theory, language rights, multilingualism, cinema, Italian migration narratives, Greek Australian place making, diaspora media, art, activism and migrant-Indigenous solidarity.

The range of subjects is considerable. A discussion of language policy may initially appear distant from a chapter on cinema or visual art, yet the contributions are connected by a consistent question: what changes when Indigenous sovereignty is treated as central, rather than peripheral, to understandings of migration and multicultural Australia? This interdisciplinary design is a strength because it presents migration not simply as demographic movement, but as a historical, cultural, political, linguistic and spatial process.

## Indigenous Sovereignty and Multiculturalism

One of the collection's most important interventions concerns the conventional story of Australian multiculturalism. Familiar accounts often follow a progression in which migrants arrive, confront difficulties, establish families and communities, preserve elements of their culture and eventually achieve acceptance as Australians. Such histories remain valuable, particularly in documenting discrimination, resilience and community contribution. The book's concern is not that these narratives are necessarily false, but that they are incomplete.

When the story moves directly from arrival to settlement and belonging, the question of whose Country migrants arrived upon may disappear. Celebratory multicultural narratives can consequently reproduce colonial assumptions by treating Australian territory as an uncontested space into which successive populations simply arrived. The collection draws attention to the intersections between migration, settler colonialism, dispossession and racial capitalism, thereby inviting readers to reconsider the foundations upon which inclusion and belonging have been built.

Maria Elena Indelicato's examination of Italian migration narratives is especially significant in this regard. Her discussion of migrant 'innocence' questions the assumption that Italian migrants' experiences of racism placed their histories outside the continuing structures of Indigenous dispossession. The book does not reduce migrants to uncomplicated beneficiaries of colonialism; rather, it insists that histories of suffering and structural implication must be considered together.

## Migrants as Marginalised and Implicated

The contributors resist a simple division between Indigenous peoples and a homogeneous category of settlers. Such a binary can obscure important differences between British colonisers, refugees, racialised migrants and other non-Indigenous groups. Zac Roberts' afterword identifies this as a key strength, observing that an undifferentiated settler category may conceal both the history of non-white migration and the longstanding relationships between Indigenous peoples and non-white communities.

The collection therefore asks readers to remain with complexity. Migrants may be subjected to racial discrimination by the settler state while nevertheless settling on Indigenous Country. Families may have escaped colonial violence elsewhere while later benefiting from colonial

structures in Australia. Migrant communities may have contributed to antiracist activism while remaining insufficiently aware of Indigenous sovereignty.

This refusal to offer an easy moral classification makes the book more sophisticated than either a purely celebratory history of migration or an approach that treats every migrant experience as equivalent to British colonial settlement. It provides a framework capable of recognising different degrees of power, vulnerability, participation and responsibility.

## Reflexivity and Positionality

A distinctive feature of the collection is its use of personal reflection and autoethnography. The editors discuss their own relationships to migration, colonialism and Indigenous Country. They recognise the risk that a researcher's personal narrative might become so prominent that it displaces Indigenous perspectives, but they also argue that positionality can expose the assumptions and privileges researchers bring to their work.

Francesco Ricatti offers a particularly compelling example through his recollection of researching letters written by Italian migrant women in the Mitchell Library. The letters described racism, sexism, violence, desperation and survival. An encounter with an Indigenous woman in the library prompted him to question both the colonial institution in which he was working and his own authority to interpret vulnerable women's private histories. The episode develops into a wider reflection on whether scholarship may reproduce exploitation even when researchers believe they are recovering marginalised voices.

The book does not present the researcher as an objective observer standing outside the structures under examination. Scholars are encouraged to consider how identity, privilege, institutional location and disciplinary practice shape what they study and how they represent others. In this formulation, reflexivity is not a brief declaration of background but a continuing obligation to remain accountable.

## Language as a Site of Colonialism and Resistance

The chapters devoted to language broaden the collection's analysis. Ricatti's discussion of multilingual multiculturalism challenges Australia's continuing monolingual orientation and connects the dominance of English to the history of settler colonialism. Multilingualism and decolonisation are therefore presented as related concerns rather than separate fields of inquiry.

This creates an important point of connection between migrant and Indigenous experiences. Migrant communities have struggled to maintain Italian, Greek and other languages within English dominant institutions, while Indigenous languages have endured far more systematic suppression and destruction under colonialism. The collection does not equate these histories. Instead, it suggests that migrant experiences of linguistic marginalisation may help communities understand the importance of Indigenous language revitalisation and epistemic justice.

This distinction is central to the book's understanding of solidarity. Meaningful relationships do not require different communities to claim identical experiences; they require attentiveness to both connection and difference.

## Italian Migration and the Question of Innocence

For readers interested in Italian Australian history, the volume is particularly valuable because it challenges established migration narratives without dismissing their significance. Italian Australian histories commonly emphasise poverty, sacrifice, discrimination, labour, family, cultural preservation and the gradual achievement of belonging. These experiences remain essential, but the collection asks that they be placed within the longer history of Indigenous sovereignty.

Indelicato's chapter, *The Dark Side of Migration: Settler Colonial Belonging and the Myths of Italians' Innocence*, directly questions the idea that experiences of racism separated Italian settlement from Indigenous dispossession. The collection encourages a mature historical account capable of acknowledging both migrant hardship and migrant implication in settler colonial systems.

This approach does not diminish what Italian migrants endured. It expands the historical lens by asking how settlement, employment, home ownership, community formation and eventual recognition as Australians occurred within a society founded upon the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. The argument is especially relevant to historians and cultural organisations preserving migrant memory: honouring community experience does not require presenting that community as historically innocent.

## Art Cinema Media and Activism

The collection does not confine decolonisation to abstract theory. Cinema, journalism, diaspora media, visual arts and activism are examined as spaces in which migrant Indigenous relationships are represented, negotiated or obscured. This attention to cultural production is important because films, newspapers, community organisations and artistic works shape collective memory and influence what later generations understand about their communities.

The discussions of Italian and Indigenous cinema, Greek diaspora media and contemporary art demonstrate that cultural representation may either reproduce familiar narratives or unsettle them. The collection is particularly interested in the capacity of cultural work to encourage dialogue, solidarity and critical self-reflection.

## Solidarity Without Equivalence

The book's movement from critique towards solidarity is crucial. If the analysis ended with migrant complicity, it could leave readers with guilt but little sense of constructive responsibility. Instead, several contributors examine activism, collaboration and the possibility of migrant Indigenous alliances.

The collection is careful not to build solidarity upon the claim that migrant discrimination and Indigenous dispossession are identical. They are historically and structurally distinct. Solidarity instead requires recognition of shared points of concern alongside respect for important differences in experience, sovereignty and power.

The later chapters, including work discussed by Roberts from Joseph Lo Bianco, Matteo Dutto and Sukhmani Khorana, explore activism and continuing dialogue. The result is a model of solidarity based not on innocence or a universal claim to victimhood, but on informed responsibility.

## Research Ethics and Methodological Contribution

Although the title identifies migration as its principal subject, the volume is equally valuable as a work on research ethics and methodology. It challenges extractive approaches in which communities are treated primarily as sources of information and encourages researchers to recognise Indigenous sovereignty, centre Indigenous perspectives and build relationships based upon reciprocity and relational accountability.

An Acknowledgement of Country, while important, is not sufficient on its own. The more demanding question is whether respect for Country changes the research question, the methodology, relationships with communities, the interpretation of evidence and the eventual outcomes of the research. This makes the volume particularly useful for students and researchers seeking to understand what ethically responsible scholarship requires in practice.

## Principal Strengths

The book's greatest strength is its willingness to unsettle comfortable historical narratives without replacing them with equally simplistic conclusions. Its interdisciplinary character enables migration to be examined through history, Indigenous studies, education, critical race scholarship, linguistics, media, cinema, diaspora studies, activism and personal testimony. Across these fields, the collection successfully connects theoretical critique with methodological responsibility.

Its reflexivity is equally significant. Contributors acknowledge that scholars operate within the structures they analyse. The book therefore asks more than whether migrant communities should reconsider their histories; it asks researchers to scrutinise the institutional and intellectual practices through which those histories are produced.

The treatment of migrant identity is nuanced and constructive. Rather than choosing between migrants as victims of racism and migrants as settlers who benefited from Indigenous dispossession, the collection demonstrates how these realities may coexist without being identical. Its purpose is not simply to identify wrongdoing, but to encourage scholarship founded on accountability, care, collaboration and respect for Indigenous sovereignty.

## Further Considerations

The volume's interdisciplinarity is among its defining strengths. By bringing together perspectives from migration studies, Indigenous scholarship, linguistics, education, media studies and cultural analysis, it demonstrates both the complexity of the subject matter and the value of dialogue across disciplinary boundaries. The diversity of approaches reflects the editors' commitment to examining migration from multiple and sometimes complementary perspectives.

The volume also remains attentive to the question of whose voices are centred. Any work advocating Indigenous sovereignty must continue to guard against allowing non-Indigenous scholars' reflections to overshadow Indigenous intellectual authority. To their credit, the editors openly acknowledge this tension and present the volume as an invitation to ongoing dialogue rather than a definitive resolution of the questions it raises.

Although its primary focus is Australia, the framework has wider relevance. The editors suggest that its questions may inform international discussions concerning migration, Indigenous sovereignty and settler colonialism. The volume's recognition of its own scope and limitations is consistent with its broader commitment to dialogue, accountability and continual critical reflection.

## Overall Evaluation

*Researching Migration on Indigenous Lands* is an important contribution to Australian migration scholarship because it asks readers to reconsider an apparently simple question: what does it mean to say that migrants came to Australia? The answer changes when Australia is understood not merely as a nation-state but as Indigenous Country with existing peoples, laws, histories, cultures and sovereignties.

This recognition does not erase migrant hardship, suggest that racialised migrants possessed the same power as British colonisers, or collapse Indigenous and migrant histories into a single experience. Rather, the volume develops a more nuanced account capable of recognising discrimination and privilege, displacement and settlement, exclusion and belonging, implication and solidarity simultaneously.

By bringing migration studies into sustained conversation with Indigenous sovereignty, the volume encourages scholars to broaden the questions they ask about migration, belonging and multiculturalism. It demonstrates that preserving migrant histories and recognising Indigenous sovereignty are not competing projects but complementary dimensions of a richer and more responsible understanding of Australia's past and present.

For this reason, the volume will be of value not only to scholars of migration and Indigenous studies, but also to historians, educators, students, community researchers and cultural organisations engaged in documenting migrant experience in Australia. Its emphasis on responsibility, relationality and ethical scholarship offers an important framework for future research and public engagement

## Concluding Remarks

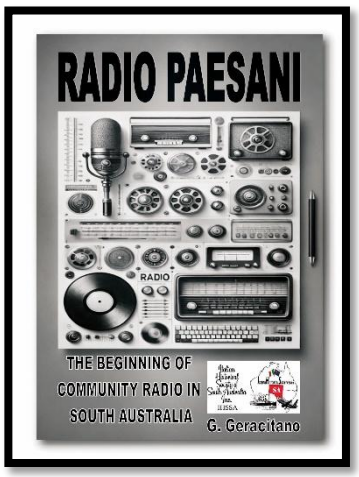
This volume is highly recommended. Although intellectually demanding and occasionally analytically sophisticated, its readiness to interrogate established narratives of Australian multiculturalism makes it a valuable to contemporary scholarship. Arguably, its most enduring contribution is the proposition that migration research conducted on Indigenous Country cannot remain ethically or intellectually detached from questions of Indigenous sovereignty.

Rosemarie Geracitano

# Radio Paesani

## The Beginning of Community Radio in South Australia

## By Giuseppe Geracitano




### Introduction

*Radio Paesani: The Beginning of Community Radio in South Australia*, 3 March 1975-2025 is a focused and valuable history of the origins of Italian-language community broadcasting in South Australia. Written by Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano and published by the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc. for the fiftieth anniversary of the first *Radio Paesani* broadcast, the book reconstructs the social, political and organisational circumstances that made ethnic community radio possible.

The volume centres on a landmark moment: at 6.00 pm on Monday 3 March 1975, the Italian program went to air from the University of Adelaide station 5UV. Because it preceded the other participating language programs in the broadcasting schedule, Geracitano presents Radio Paesani as very likely the first non-English community radio program broadcast in Australia. The book explains why this achievement belonged not to one person alone, but to a network of educators, students, technicians, announcers, community organisations and broadcasting pioneers.

Although relatively brief, the book reaches beyond a simple anniversary account. It examines changes in broadcasting law, the emergence of multicultural policy, the work of the Italian Education Movement, the practical difficulties of producing radio with limited resources, and the later transition from Radio Paesani to Radio Italiana. Its broader theme is the importance of recognising the individuals whose early contributions can disappear when institutional histories are simplified over time.

### Purpose and Historical Importance

The book's primary purpose is to establish a carefully documented account of how Italian community radio began in South Australia and to acknowledge the pioneers who made it possible. Geracitano is explicit about his historical method. He draws upon interviews with Keith Conlon, Rosa Colanero and Lino Cardone; discussions with other early participants; Ilario Nesci's autobiography; and his own records, minutes and notes as a member and later chairman of the Italian Education Movement.

This attention to sources is especially important because the origins of Radio Paesani have been contested. The volume challenges the abbreviated claim that the service was simply founded by a group of university students. Students were central to the project, but the founding network also included teachers, adult migrants, a librarian, a bus driver and community advocates. By restoring these different participants to the record, the book offers a credible account of collective achievement.

The history also has significance beyond the Italian community. Radio Paesani emerged during the formative period of Australian community broadcasting, before the creation of the Special

Broadcasting Service in 1977. Its story demonstrates how local experimentation, legislative reform and voluntary community action helped establish the multilingual broadcasting environment now regarded as an important part of Australian public life.

## Community Radio and Social Change

Geracitano places the development of Radio Paesani within the major social changes of the 1970s. Postwar migration had transformed Australia from a predominantly Anglo-Celtic society into a more visibly multicultural nation. At the same time, the Whitlam Government federally and the Dunstan Government in South Australia encouraged greater recognition of ethnic communities, linguistic diversity and cultural participation.

The University of Adelaide's Department of Continuing Education provided the institutional setting for community radio. A substantial donation from Kenneth Stirling enabled the University to establish 5UV, while Keith Conlon, appointed producer-manager in 1971 helped develop its educational and community purpose. The station initially operated under a special licence that did not fit conventional commercial or national broadcasting categories. Its later public-radio licence required community access, creating an opportunity for cultural groups to produce their own programs.

A crucial legal change occurred in 1974, when restrictions preventing spoken languages other than English from being broadcast were removed. Earlier programs could play foreign-language music, but announcements were required to be in English. The reform allowed ethnic communities to speak directly to listeners in their own languages and transformed radio from a presentation of ethnic music into a medium of community communication.

## The Italian Education Movement

The Italian Education Movement forms the organisational bridge between language advocacy and broadcasting. It emerged from the Italian Tertiary Students Association in response to concern about the maintenance and teaching of Italian. Led initially by Alex Gardini, with Romano Rubichi, Rosa Matto, Rosa Colanero and Sara Kitto among its executive and committee members, the Italian Education Movement sought to introduce Italian language and culture into schools and improve the preparation of teachers.

The organisation achieved practical results. Its advocacy contributed to the introduction of Italian in selected primary schools, the development of teacher-training at the Adelaide College of Advanced Education, and the establishment in 1975 of the South Australian Association of Teachers of Italian. These activities reveal that Radio Paesani did not arise in isolation. It formed part of a wider effort to preserve language, strengthen cultural confidence and provide services appropriate to a changing community.

Rosa Colanero's connection with Keith Conlon was the catalyst that brought the broadcasting opportunity to the Italian Education Movement. Already volunteering at 5UV, she discussed the station's plans with Conlon and encouraged the Italian Education Movement to participate. This sequence gives her role particular historical importance; she connected an emerging broadcasting platform with an organisation capable of representing an Italian community program.

## The Birth of Ethnic Community Broadcasting

The October 1974 community broadcasting seminar at the University of Adelaide was a decisive event. Alex Gardini, Rosa Colanero and Ilario Nesci attended on behalf of the Italian community, alongside representatives of Dutch, Polish, Ukrainian and Greek groups. Because access depended on community representation rather than individual broadcasting, the Italian Education Movement became the initial umbrella organisation for the Italian program.

The seminar created the nucleus from which Ethnic Broadcasters Incorporated later developed. It also led directly to the formation of Radio Paesani, with Colanero entrusted to organise the program. When broadcasting began on 3 March 1975, Enzo Dobrilla was the first voice heard. Dutch and Ukrainian programs followed later that week, with Polish and Greek services joining soon afterwards. By the end of 1977, twenty-six groups were broadcasting through 5UV.

The book is particularly effective in demonstrating that innovation emerges from convergence. University adult education, broadcasting reform, multicultural policy and community activism were all necessary. No single development would have produced Radio Paesani independently; together, they created conditions in which multilingual community broadcasting could begin.

## Programming With Limited Resources

The account of Radio Paesani's early production is one of the book's most engaging sections. The team developed a program that was educational, cultural and practical. Episodes initially focused on the regions of Italy, combining geography, history, folklore, music, recipes and accounts of migrants from those regions living in South Australia. The name Paesani reflected this regional emphasis and conveyed a sense of familiarity and shared origin.

The *Aiuto* segment gave the program an important welfare function. Professionals discussed issues affecting migrants and provided useful information in Italian. Community activities, concerts and club events were also promoted, giving organisations a means of reaching audiences that conventional media rarely served. The publicity provided by Radio Paesani contributed to the success of the First National Italian Festival in 1976 and strengthened communication across a diverse network of clubs.

These achievements were realised with very modest resources. Records were borrowed from Alfa Emporium on the condition that they be returned undamaged. Programs were pre-recorded at home because studio sessions cost twenty dollars, and tapes were submitted to 5UV for approval before broadcast. Lino Cardone later provided essential technical assistance through the language laboratory at the South Australian Institute of Technology. Such details give this history immediacy and show how ingenuity and volunteer labour compensated for the absence of funding and professional infrastructure.

The program was transmitted live on only two occasions: an interview with Gianni Morandi after his delayed flight prevented pre-recording, and an emergency broadcast when a prepared tape could not be found. These episodes capture the unpredictability of pioneering community radio and the confidence the team developed as it gained experience.

## Language Identity and Community Service

Radio Paesani served listeners across generations. For older migrants, it offered news, familiar music, regional culture and the comfort of hearing Italian on Australian radio. For younger Italian Australians, many of whom had concentrated on mastering English and progressing through education, it provided a renewed connection with family language and heritage.

The book does not romanticise this task. Several early broadcasters had migrated as children or had been born in Australia and were not equally confident in formal spoken Italian. Questions of pronunciation and language standards produced disagreement with members of the Italian Education Movement. The arrival of Gabriele Damiani, a fluent Italian speaker who became the program's principal announcer, helped resolve these difficulties and gave Radio Paesani a recognisable voice.

This discussion is valuable because it reveals that language maintenance was not merely symbolic. Italian was required for communication between first-generation migrants and younger professionals, teachers and service providers. Radio therefore contributed both to cultural preservation and to practical access, reducing the linguistic distance between institutions and the people they served.

## Women Leadership and Collective Contribution

One of the volume's most important contributions is its recognition of Rosa Colanero as the catalyst and inaugural program director. At only twenty-three years of age, she coordinated research, scripts, contributors and production while helping establish a new form of broadcasting. A contemporary newspaper article reproduced in the book confirms both her leadership and the program's cultural and welfare aims.

Colanero's position was difficult within a community whose formal organisations were then predominantly led by men. Geracitano records occasions when her authority was questioned simply because she was a young woman. Her departure for further study at La Sapienza University of Rome at the end of 1976 brought her formal leadership to a close, but it does not diminish her foundational role.

The book also resists replacing one simplified founder narrative with another. Rosa Matto, Rosanna Caporale, Nives Zancanaro, Sara Kitto, Enzo Dobrilla, Ilario Nesci, Lino Cardone, Gabriele Damiani and many later contributors performed distinct and necessary tasks. The strongest conclusion is therefore collective: Radio Paesani depended upon people with different skills who researched, announced, recorded, administered, supplied material and sustained community relationships.

## From Radio Paesani to Radio Italiana

The later chapters address organisational change and disagreement. Radio Paesani initially operated as a subcommittee of the Italian Education Movement, whose chairman functioned as the program's de facto president while broadcasters selected a program director and managed day-to-day production. By 1977, as the radio group expanded and Ethnic Broadcasters Incorporated moved towards formal incorporation, questions arose about whether Radio Paesani should become independent.

The Italian Education Movement accepted independence as an eventual objective but favoured a structured process involving consultation with all announcers. Giovanni Di Sessa and Luigi Penna

pressed for separation more quickly. After a series of discussions failed to produce agreement, Radio Paesani separated unilaterally from the Italian Education Movement at the end of 1977. On 17 December 1978, members adopted a new constitution establishing Radio Italiana, with Luigi Penna as its first president.

Geracitano presents this transition as essential to understanding later disagreements about foundation and ownership. His account is necessarily shaped by his direct participation but is also supported by interviews and surviving records and it openly identifies areas of dispute. This transparency enables readers to distinguish the establishment of the original program in 1974-75 from the later creation of Radio Italiana as a separate organisation.

## Principal Strengths

The book's greatest strength is its recovery of a neglected founding history. It identifies the institutional, legal and social conditions behind the first broadcast while also naming the volunteers whose contributions made it possible. The use of interviews, personal records, a contemporary newspaper article, photographs and a detailed timeline give the account evidentiary depth and makes it useful to future researchers.

A second strength is the connection between broadcasting and wider Italian community development. Radio Paesani is shown not simply as a media program, but as part of a movement involving language education, teacher preparation, interpreting, multicultural policy, cultural festivals and migrant welfare. This context explains why radio mattered and why its audience regarded it as a community voice.

The attention given to practical production is also highly effective. Borrowed records, home recording, reel-to-reel tapes, volunteer technicians, improvised live broadcasts and sponsorship from community clubs convey the labour behind each hour on air. These details transform an institutional history into a vivid account of experimentation, cooperation and persistence.

Finally, the book makes an important ethical intervention by distinguishing long service from foundational contribution. Later broadcasters sustained and expanded Italian community radio, while the early pioneers created the conditions from which that continuing service grew. Both forms of contribution deserve recognition.

## Further Considerations

As a commemorative history, *Radio Paesani* is deliberately focused on establishing the sequence of events that led to the creation of Italian-language community broadcasting in South Australia and on restoring overlooked participants to the historical record. This focused approach is one of the book's distinguishing strengths. It allows Geracitano to examine a formative period in considerable detail and to provide a depth of analysis that would be difficult to achieve in a broader history of Italian migration or multicultural broadcasting.

The author's dual role as historian and participant brings particular insight to the narrative. His involvement provides access to records, firsthand knowledge, and institutional memory that might otherwise have been lost. At the same time, he demonstrates a commitment to transparency by identifying his sources, acknowledging differing recollections, and drawing upon interviews, contemporary publications, organisational records, and personal archives to support his account.

The extensive use of oral testimony is especially valuable. While memories are inevitably shaped by the passage of time, oral histories preserve voices, experiences, and perspectives that are often absent from official records. Combined with documentary evidence, they create a richer and more human understanding of the past. In this respect, the book makes an important contribution not only to broadcasting history but also to the preservation of community memory.

The volume's primary purpose is to document and recognise the pioneers who helped establish Radio Paesani and to clarify the historical circumstances surrounding its development. Future researchers may choose to expand upon this foundation by examining additional perspectives on the organisational changes that followed, including the transition from Radio Paesani to Radio Italiana. Such work would complement rather than diminish the valuable historical record assembled here.

Minor editorial refinements to spelling, punctuation, and referencing could further strengthen the book as a long-term reference source. These observations do not detract from the significance of the work; rather, they highlight the value of preserving and building upon this important body of research for future generations.

## Concluding Remarks

*Radio Paesani: The Beginning of Community Radio in South Australia* is an important contribution to the history of Italian South Australians and to the broader history of Australian community broadcasting. Through a thoughtful combination of oral testimony, documentary evidence, and historical analysis, Giuseppe Geracitano reconstructs the circumstances that enabled the emergence of Italian-language community radio and preserves the stories of the pioneers who made it possible.

The book demonstrates that the beginnings of community broadcasting were not the result of a single individual or event. Rather, they emerged from the convergence of educational advocacy, legislative reform, multicultural policy, university initiative, and sustained volunteer effort. In tracing these interconnected developments, Geracitano shows how Radio Paesani became a vital means of preserving language and culture, promoting community activities, supporting migrant welfare, and connecting people across South Australia's growing Italian community.

One of the book's most significant achievements is its recognition of the many individuals whose efforts contributed to the program's success. By carefully distinguishing the origins of Radio Paesani from the later establishment of Radio Italiana, Geracitano provides important historical clarity while ensuring that the contributions of the founding generation are neither overlooked nor forgotten.

For members of the Italian community, this volume preserves an important story of initiative, service, cultural continuity, and community building. For historians and researchers, it offers a valuable case study of the emergence of multilingual broadcasting in Australia. For younger generations, it provides an opportunity to appreciate the vision, commitment, and volunteer spirit that created a public voice for a community at a time when hearing Italian spoken on Australian radio represented a significant social and cultural milestone.

More broadly, the book reminds us that strong communities are built through participation, communication, and collaboration. The story of Radio Paesani demonstrates the importance of creating spaces in which people can share language, culture, experiences, and ideas. At a time when social connection, civic engagement, and community participation remain as important as

ever, this history speaks not only to the achievements of the past but also to the continuing relevance of community broadcasting in contemporary society.

As both a historical study and a tribute to a pioneering generation, *Radio Paesani: The Beginning of Community Radio in South Australia* is a valuable resource for historians, students, researchers, broadcasters, and members of the wider community. More importantly, it stands as a reminder of the importance of preserving community memories and recognising the collective efforts that help shape South Australia's multicultural society.

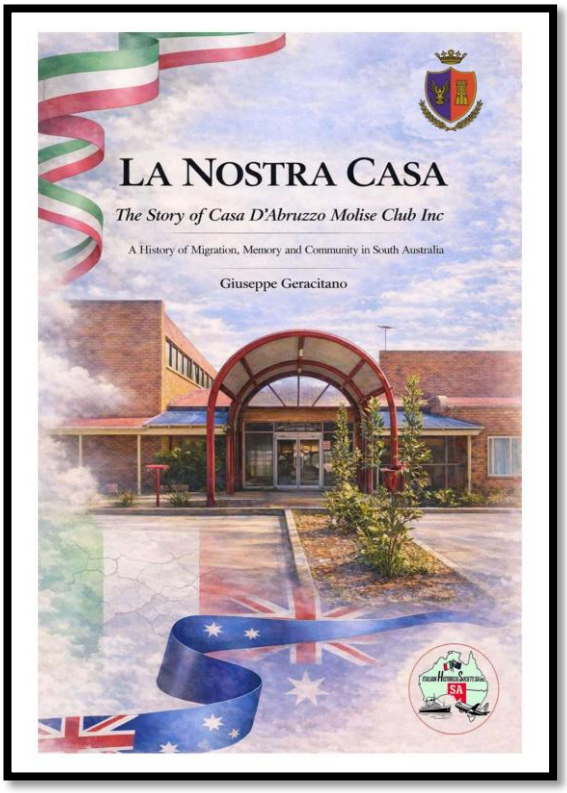
*Radio Paesani: The Beginning of Community Radio in South Australia* is a carefully researched and historically significant work. Its enduring message is that community broadcasting was built collectively: through vision, leadership, persistence, service, and a commitment to community. In preserving this history, Geracitano has ensured that the voices of those pioneers who helped shape multilingual broadcasting in South Australia will continue to be heard by future generations.

Rosemarie Geracitano

# La Nostra Casa (Our House)

## The Story of Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc.

### By Giuseppe Geracitano




## Introduction

*La Nostra Casa, Our House: The Story of Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc.* is a thoughtful history of one of South Australia's enduring Italian regional organisations. Written by Giuseppe Geracitano and published by the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc., it traces the Club's development from informal networks of Abruzzese and Molisani migrants to the establishment of a permanent cultural and social home in Prospect.

The book is also about the history of postwar migration, regional identity, religious devotion, voluntary labour and family life. Drawing on archival documents, photographs, newspapers, committee records and oral testimony, Geracitano shows how migrants transformed hardship and separation into solidarity and belonging. The title, meaning 'Our House', captures the Club's role as far more than a hall: it became a place where language, food, faith, memory and friendship could be sustained.

## Purpose and historical importance

The book preserves the history of Casa D'Abruzzo Molise and recognised contributors whose work might otherwise be forgotten. This is especially valuable because parts of the Club's early history were never fully documented and some original records, correspondence, costumes and films were lost.

Oral history therefore plays an essential role. Interviews recover motivations, disagreements, generosity and informal labour that rarely appear in official minutes. The book acknowledges that memories may differ, while also recognising that formal records often privilege officeholders and overlook domestic work, family support and women's contributions. Combining testimony with documentary and photographic evidence produces a fuller community history.

## Migration and the foundations of community

The opening chapters place the Club within migration from Abruzzo and Molise. Poverty, limited employment, war and uneven postwar reconstruction encouraged many people to leave. Migration

often operated through family chains: one person travelled first and then helped relatives, friends or paesani find work and accommodation.

In Adelaide, many migrants entered construction, manufacturing, agriculture and other demanding industries. They settled in suburbs including Prospect, Hindmarsh, Thebarton, Torrensville, Croydon and Woodville, where familiar relationships could be recreated. Families grew vegetables, made traditional foods, spoke dialect and supported one another with work, housing and childcare.

As families became established and moved beyond the original migrant neighborhoods, these informal networks became harder to maintain. A permanent organisation was needed to preserve regional identity, relationships and collective memory.

## From Centro Adriatico to Casa D'Abruzzo Molise

Domenico Michele Colanero emerges as a central figure in the formation of Centro Adriatico. After arriving from Castel Frentano in 1956, his education and English-language ability enabled him to assist other migrants as an interpreter, organiser and advocate. The Colanero home became an informal refuge where new arrivals received accommodation and practical help.

In 1967, eleven men met at Carmelo Siciliano's home in Fulham Gardens and established Centro Adriatico. Its inclusive name reflected connections between migrants from Abruzzo, Molise, Marche and other regions. Operating through homes, garages and hired halls, the organisation arranged dances, picnics, theatre, choirs and folk dancing. Its participation in the National Italian Festivals of 1976 and 1978 expressed a confident desire to share Italian culture with the wider South Australian community.

The organisation became Casa D'Abruzzo in 1978, Casa D'Abruzzo and Molise in 1981, and Casa D'Abruzzo Molise San Gabriele Club in 1984. By 1987 it had adopted the name Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Incorporated. These changes reflected continuing discussion about representation, regional identity and the relationship between social, cultural and religious purposes. The book's willingness to acknowledge disagreement gives history credibility and shows that endurance requires negotiation as well as cooperation.

## Saint Gabriele and migrant devotion

The history of devotion to Saint Gabriele dell'Addolorata broadens the narrative beyond administration. Migrants brought this devotion from Abruzzo as part of their spiritual and emotional inheritance. In 1984, Father Luca Spinosi and community members established the Committee of St Gabriel Inc. and commissioned a wooden statue from Italy.

Placed at St Paul's Retreat in Glen Osmond, the statue became the focus of an annual feast combining Mass, procession, music, food and family gathering. At its height, the event reportedly attracted about 3,000 people. The chapter demonstrates that religion and cultural life were closely connected: the feast provided a spiritual centre, while the Club offered a social and cultural home.

## Fundraising and the building of the Club

The construction of the permanent hall is the book's emotional and historical center. Two adjoining properties at 86-88 Churchill Road, Prospect, were purchased in 1980. What began as a plan to adapt existing houses grew into the ambition to construct a purpose-designed community hall.

The project was completed without government grants. Funds came from memberships, donations, loans, raffles, dances, dinners and community events. The Miss Abruzzo Molise Quest was particularly successful: contestants raised money through family and social activities rather than being judged on appearance. Elisabetta Olivastri raised more than $28,000, while the Quest produced a total of $47,153.24. The Youth Group also organised rallies, discos and movie nights, raising money while giving younger Italian Australians a place to build friendships and explore their identity.

Between 1984 and 1986, tradespeople donated labour, materials, meals and transport, often working on weekends after completing their regular jobs. The hall opened on 11 October 1987. It represented more than a completed building; it was the physical expression of collective sacrifice and confidence in the community's future in South Australia.

## Women's essential contribution

A major strength of the book is its recognition of women's frequently overlooked labour. Although early formal leadership was dominated by men, women cooked, cleaned, decorated, served meals, organised functions, raised funds and supported construction workers. The Ladies Committee financed the complete kitchen, including crockery and cutlery.

Women often paid to attend events they had helped organise and continued working throughout them. Their contribution was therefore physical, financial, social and emotional. By recording this labour, the book corrects historical imbalance and reinforces one of its central insights: bricks and steel created the hall, but hospitality, relationships and care made it a home.

## Culture family and continuity

After the hall opened, Casa D'Abruzzo Molise became a center for dinners, dances, weddings, religious celebrations, card games, bocce, language classes and cultural activities. Food served as both memory and cultural transmission, with porchetta and regional biscuits becoming closely associated with the Club's participation in the Italian Festival and Carnevale.

The AM Soccer Club, established in 1992, and the later construction of Carmine's Playground demonstrate efforts to involve younger generations and families. These initiatives recognised that cultural continuity depends not only on preserving the past but also on responding to contemporary community life.

## Honouring the past while shaping the future

The final chapters address how a migrant organisation can remain relevant after the circumstances that created it have changed. The founding generation is ageing, volunteering is more difficult, and younger descendants may not speak Italian or experience regional identity in the same way. The book presents this not as failure, but as the natural consequence of successful settlement.

Its proposals include intergenerational cooking workshops, family gatherings, youth activities, mentoring, flexible pathways into committee service, cultural storytelling, continued support for older members and structured succession planning. The message is clear: preservation does not mean freezing the Club in its 1987 form. Its future depends upon retaining a distinctive heritage while welcoming younger generations, mixed-heritage families and the broader community.

## Strengths and further considerations

*La Nostra Casa, Our House: The Story of Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc* is strongest when institutional developments are connected to lived experience. Oral testimony adds warmth, humour and emotion, while the photographs and appendices preserve the names of presidents, founders, life members, tradespeople, donors and interviewees. The book also deserves praise for recognising women's labour and recording internal tensions rather than presenting an artificially harmonious history.

Its respectful and celebratory tone is appropriate to a commemorative community history. The specific focus on one organisation is a mark of distinction, although it also opens opportunities for further comparative research into regional clubs, leadership and changing expressions of Italian identity. Continued oral-history collection and additional family records could expand this valuable foundation.

Several themes - migration, sacrifice, belonging, voluntary service and cultural continuity - recur throughout the work. Their repetition reflects their importance, although a future edition could streamline some passages and further standardise names, dates and terminology. Such refinement would strengthen the book as a reference work without diminishing its historical contribution.

## Overall evaluation

*La Nostra Casa, Our House: The Story of Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc*, Our House, is an important contribution to the history of Italian migration and community formation in South Australia. It shows that Casa D'Abruzzo Molise gave migrants more than entertainment: it offered recognition, familiarity, mutual assistance and a place where people could belong without explaining their language, food, faith or customs.

The book's greatest insight is that a community is not created by a building alone. Generations of members invested in the Club with labour, generosity, relationships and memory. At the same time, the values that created it: hospitality, cooperation, family, service and cultural pride, must continue to be adapted for new generations.

For members, the volume is a tribute to those who built their community. For descendants of Abruzzese and Molisani migrants, it provides a connection to family history and regional heritage. For historians and general readers, it offers a valuable account of how migrant communities created institutions that helped transform South Australia.

## Overall assessment:

Highly recommended. *La Nostra Casa, Our House: The Story of Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc* is warm, considered and historically valuable. Above all, it demonstrates how migrants rebuild a sense of home through courage, sacrifice and collective effort, and how that home can continue to welcome future generations.

Rosemarie Geracitano

# ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

The Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc. was established in 2015, born from a growing awareness that the memories, documents, and lived experiences of Italian migrants in South Australia were at risk of fading as the first post-war generation aged. Community leaders, historians, and volunteers recognised that without a dedicated effort to preserve this heritage, an irreplaceable chapter of South Australian history would be lost. In response to this urgency, the Society formed with a clear and enduring mission: to safeguard the stories, photographs, artefacts, and cultural traditions that shaped the Italian presence in the state, and to develop a primary source collection of historical documents that does not form part of the State archives but remains within the custodianship of the community itself.

From its inception, the Society has worked to honour the journey of Italian migrants: their courage, labour, resilience, and the communities they built. Its objectives reflect a deep respect for both historical accuracy and the emotional truth of lived experience. The Society collects and preserves archival materials, promotes research and education, documents the evolution of Italian clubs and associations, and encourages families to share their histories. At its heart lies a desire to strengthen intergenerational connections, ensuring that younger generations understand the sacrifices and achievements that underpin their cultural identity.

To achieve this, the Society employs a methodology that blends archival practice, oral history, and community-based research. Photographs, documents, and artefacts are catalogued and digitised according to professional archival standards, protecting them for future study. Oral history interviews capture the voices, memories, and emotions that cannot be found in written records, preserving the nuances of migration, work, family life, and community involvement. Collaboration with clubs, regional associations, and families ensures that the historical record is inclusive, accurate, and grounded in community knowledge. This approach, rigorous yet deeply human, allows the Society to create a historical archive that is both academically reliable and emotionally resonant.

Over the years, the Society has undertaken a broad range of projects that reflect the diversity and richness of Italian life in South Australia. Its work encompasses migration and settlement history, the development of Italian clubs and regional associations, family history and genealogy, and an extensive oral history program. It has documented the stories of community leaders, club founders, women's committees, and everyday migrants whose contributions shaped the social and cultural landscape of the state. Exhibitions, public programs, and digitisation initiatives have further extended the Society's reach, making history accessible to schools, researchers, and the wider community.

The Society's publications form an important part of its legacy. These include community histories, oral history booklets, journals, exhibition catalogues, and educational materials that illuminate the Italian experience in South Australia. Among its major works is *La Nostra Casa: The History of the Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc.*, a comprehensive and richly detailed account

of a significant regional club. Additional publications continue to emerge as the Society expands its research and deepens its archival collections.

Today, the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc. stands as a guardian of memory and a custodian of cultural heritage. Through its ongoing work, it ensures that the stories of Italian migrants: stories of hardship, hope, community, and belonging remain alive, honoured, and accessible for generations to come.

# Publications:

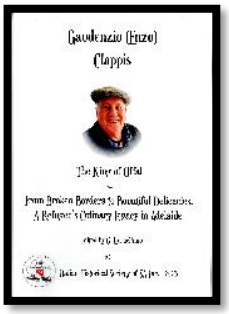
## Whole of Life:




**Sebastiano Galipo: From Capo D'Orlando to Adelaide**
Story of Sebastiano Galipo who migrated at the age of 4 and built an enterprise from scratch to a nationally recognised company which has won many national awards.




**Rita Bianca Palumbo: From Lo Stretto to Adelaide**
Story of Rita Bianca Palumbo who migrated at the age of 10 and at 16 became the first Italian Secretary of the Good Neighbour Council Woodville. Has used her interpreting skills to assist the community and guided the Sicilia Social and Sport Club for 18 years as president




**Gaudenzio (Enzo) Clappis: The King of Offal**
From Broken Borders to Bountiful Delicacies: A Refugee's Culinary Legacy in Adelaide. The story of Enzo Clappis from a refugee's camp to the foundation of Buonasera Restaurant and establishment of Italian cuisine in Adelaide.



**Andy Clappis: Crust to Creation**

A Culinary journey of Andy Clappis, from humble loaves to artisan mastery. Story of Andy Clappis who continued the family culinary legacy and became a master bread maker.




**Ilario Nesci: From Caulonia's Shores to Buonasera's Doors. An Italian Australian Culinary Journey to Adelaide**

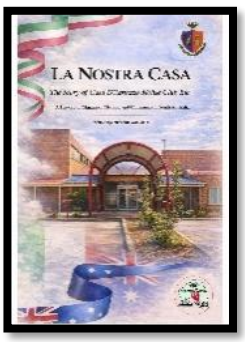
The story of Ilario Nesci who has guided Buonasera Restaurant for almost 60 years.

## Community Organisations:




**Radio Paesani: The Beginning of Community Radio in South Australia**

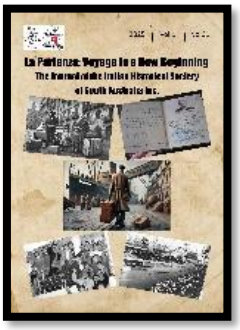
The Story of the establishment of Radio Paesani and the beginning Italian community radio in Adelaide.




**La Nostra Casa: The Story of Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc.**

A story of the Abruzzese and Molisani migrants in Adelaide and the establishment of the Casa D'Abruzzo Molise Club Inc.

## Journal:




**La Partenza Voyage to a New Beginning Vol 1**

History of Italian Immigration and
Eight short stories on Italian
Immigrants in Adelaide

All publications in hard copies are available in the State Library of South Australia and digital copies are available on the Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc website

www.ihssa.com.au

Follow us on Facebook for all the updates on further publications. For enquiries contact the Society:

Telephone: 0403 177 688
Email: ihssa@outlook.com.au
Giuseppe (Joe) Geracitano  President

# Support the Publication Fund

Help us record and publish the life stories, photographs and documents of Italian migrants to South Australia before they are lost.

Your support helps fund oral history transcription and translation, editing, design, printing and archival access.

**The Italian Historical Society gratefully acknowledges every generous sponsor of the Publication Fund.**

See any member of the committee for more information.

*Together, we can preserve our community's stories.*

**SCAN TO SUPPORT**



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Please seek independent tax advice.

# Carnevale Comes to Adelaide: A Celebration of Italian Heritage, Tradition and Community

Few celebrations capture the spirit, colour, and vitality of Italy quite like **Carnevale**. For centuries, towns and cities across Italy have come alive with music, masks, costumes, parades, and festivities as communities gather to celebrate one of the most cherished events on the Italian cultural calendar. From the grand canals of Venice to the villages of southern Italy, Carnevale is a joyful expression of creativity, community, and tradition that has been passed from generation to generation.




Perhaps best known for its magnificent masks and elegant masquerade balls, Carnevale has its roots in medieval and Renaissance Italy. The wearing of masks allowed people from all walks of life to set aside social distinctions and join together in an atmosphere of celebration, laughter, and friendship. Today, the tradition continues to enchant people around the world, serving as a vibrant reminder of Italy's rich cultural heritage and love of bringing people together.

The Italian Historical Society of South Australia Inc. is proud to bring this timeless tradition to Adelaide with its inaugural **Carnevale: Un Ballo in Maschera (Mask Ball)** on **Saturday, 6 February 2027**. Inspired by the elegance and mystery of the great Italian Carnevale celebrations, the evening promises to be a spectacular celebration of **culture, heritage, and community**, as highlighted in the Society's promotional flyer.

Guests will be invited to embrace the magic of Carnevale by attending in formal attire and masquerade masks, creating an atmosphere reminiscent of the famous Venetian balls. The evening will feature exceptional food, music, entertainment, dancing, and plenty of opportunities to connect with fellow members of the community while celebrating the traditions that have shaped generations of Italian families.

More than simply a social event, the Carnevale Mask Ball is an opportunity to honour the enduring contribution of Italian migrants and their descendants to South Australia. It reflects the Society's ongoing commitment to preserving and sharing the stories, customs, and traditions that form an important part of our multicultural heritage.

Whether your family arrived in Australia generations ago or you simply appreciate Italian culture, the Carnevale Mask Ball promises an unforgettable evening filled with elegance, tradition, and celebration. The Society warmly invites members, supporters, friends, and the wider community to join together and experience the wonder of this iconic Italian heritage festival.

**Vivi la Magia del Carnevale!** Come and celebrate the beauty of Italian culture, the strength of community, and the joy of keeping treasured traditions alive for future generations.

Proceeds from the event will assist the Society's Publication Fund to capture, preserve, and publish migrant stories, recognising that whenever a loved one passes without sharing their story, a lifetime of knowledge and experience is lost forever.

**Preserve the Past – Support the Future.**




Thank you for Supporting the Publication Fund

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# Thank you for supporting the Publication Fund

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# Say hello to Eclipse Real Estate.

## YOUR HOME TEAM

Hi, I'm Michael, director of Eclipse. This year marks 10 years of Eclipse, and while plenty has changed, what matters to us hasn't. From sales to property management, we're here to make real estate feel a little more human. Professional when it matters, personal always, and as comfortable as a chat over the fence.

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