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CO.AS.IT.'s
50TH ANNIVERSARY



A significant
story

SEPTEMBER 2018



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Dear friends,

It is a great honour for me to pay tribute to all those who are no longer with us and contributed in so many ways to the success of CO.AS.IT.

CO.AS.IT. has been involved with so many events, projects and activities that our timeline coincides with key moments in the history of the Italian community in Victoria and in Australia. CO.AS.IT. has been and still is a remarkable and vital presence in Australian society. We tried to incorporate this presence and our everyday work in this special insert in IL GLOBO.

50 Years of work with the Australian Italian community and 50 years of commitment to a fair and inclusive Australian society are great achievements for an organization established by Italian migrant families.

Today we are celebrating those achievements, with our past and present board members, our past and present members of staff and our past and present volunteers and supporters. But today, most importantly, we are celebrating CO.AS.IT., a great multicultural organization, a service provider, a place of memories and heritage but also a centre for the promotion of excellence and the exchange of new ideas.

CO.AS.IT. is part of the multicultural landscape of Australia: over the years we have been fundamental in the promotion of the Italian language and culture.

CO.AS.IT. developed services for the Italian community, for our ageing community, for the most disadvantaged members of our community, mindful of social, cultural and linguistic diversity.

Today we are also celebrating ourselves, our own diversity, our coming from different backgrounds and experiences, but everyone connected to a vision, to an idea, to a goal. I believe that CO.AS.IT. can continue to bring us together, keep us focused on what must be done and provide a common place of engagement for those who wish to continue to serve the Australian Italian community.

Happy Birthday CO.AS.IT.

Cav. Rhonda Barro
President of CO.AS.IT.



To my fellow Italians,

Though I was nominated Ambassador to Australia only a few months ago, it didn't take me long to understand the importance of CO.AS.IT.s in Australia and, in particular, of Melbourne's CO.AS.IT., whose 50th anniversary we are celebrating this year.

When it was founded, CO.AS.IT. was very different from what it is now, because the Italian community was different then. The unifying principle that runs through the fifty years of CO.AS.IT.'s activity is the spirit of service for the community. Then it was about helping and assisting the many young Italians who had arrived in a distant land after a long journey in order to seek a better life; now it's about offering the best assistance to the elderly within that community and, in parallel, working for the promotion of the Italian language among the young generations. The latter is one of the main objectives of the Italian diplomatic and consular network, which operates in Australia through a Dirigente Scolastico and a network of Italian Cultural Institutes, Enti Gestori, Dante Alighieri Committees and Lettori. It is calculated that Italian is spoken at home by over 300,000 Australians (approximately 1.6% of the population). Moreover, in 2017 Australia retained its position as the first non-European country by number of students of Italian, with 360,000 learners – a number that depends to a large extent, though certainly not exclusively, on the numerous community of Italian origin. Italian is currently taught in 20 Australian universities, both as a major and as a foreign language within other degree courses such as Science or Economy. Moreover, Italian is among the 13 foreign languages recognised by the National School Curriculum, and it is the second most studied language in Australian schools after Chinese.

The role of CO.AS.IT. in Melbourne – the Australian city with the largest Italian community (over 50,000 Italian citizens and about 400,000 Australians of Italian origin) and about 145,000 students of Italian – is a strategic one. CO.AS.IT. offers today a model that local authorities believe to be applicable also to other ethnic groups: this shows how far sighted the Italian Government was when it started it. Back then there were no Italian MPs elected abroad, there was no C.G.I.E. and no Com.It.Es., whereas today the Italian community abroad is widely represented through a variety of organs.

In all this are the foundations of CO.AS.IT. which, thanks to its fifty years of history, is still in the heart of all Italians.

Stefano Gatti
Ambassador of Italy to Australia





Dear friends,

CO.AS.IT. is “fifty years young,” even though fifty years ago everything was different. Italians had arrived recently then, and many were yet to arrive. Since then, many things have changed. Italians have contributed crucially to the building of Melbourne and Australia, and play now a leading role in this country. The times then were hard and complicated. Sure, there was the desire to work and there was a lot of hope in the future, but life was hard and there was need for practical as well as moral support.

This need for support was understood by the Italian Government, which in 1967 created CO.AS.IT., an organisation which would respond to the needs of migrants offering assistance and social and educational services for Italian migrants Down Under.

I do not know how many Italians have been helped and supported by CO.AS.IT., but it is certain that without CO.AS.IT. life would have been harder, if not impossible for many people.

It would be dutiful for me to mention all those who, within CO.AS.IT., gave their best for the community, but they are too many, and to mention only some would be unfair to the others. What can and must be said is that CO.AS.IT. has been and is a keystone of our Italian community.

I wrote at the beginning “fifty years young” because, even though the community has changed, the importance of CO.AS.IT. remains unchanged. Certainly CO.AS.IT. no longer greets migrants and provides them with material and social assistance, but CO.AS.IT. continues in its work for the community, for instance helping the elderly and staying close to them, and promoting the teaching of the Italian language.

CO.AS.IT. has been able to maintain its importance because over the years it has been able to evolve through deep changes, becoming an innovative and multidisciplinary provider of high quality services in the fields of health, education and Italian history and culture. The promotion of its services, the construction of ad hoc packages for the elderly and the disabled, the expansion of the Department of Italian Language, Culture and Heritage: these are the means through which CO.AS.IT. has earned the trust of the Italian community over the years.

I wish to thank, on behalf of the Consulate, the President, Cavalier Rhonda Barro – hers is the only name I mention, in her quality of current President and in representation of all the names I am unable to list – and all her staff, for the constant support given to Italians residing in Victoria.

All the best to CO.AS.IT. on the occasion of its first fifty years!

Dott. Pierluigi Trombetta
Consul Generale of Italy, Melbourne



The external wall of CO.AS.IT.
 painted by Alice Pasquini



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Sir Henry Winneke (Governor of Victoria) and Lady Winneke, with Elda Vaccari (President of CO.AS.IT.) and CO.AS.IT.'s Honorary Secretary Giovanni Scomparin

A STORY THAT BEGAN IN A YEAR THAT SHOOK THE WORLD

1968 – the year CO.AS.IT. was established in Melbourne – has gone down in history as a year that shook the world. Historians speak of it as a revolutionary year.

In France, student revolts almost pushed President Charles de Gaulle to resign. In England, Italy, Japan and Mexico, uprisings of students and workers put a strain on the established order while mass demonstrations in the United States led to the decision of President Lyndon Johnson not to stand for a new term and to the victory of the Republican Richard Nixon in presidential elections held at the end of that year.

Violent demonstrations took place in Australia as well. People's opposition to Australia's military involvement in the Vietnam War was exacerbated by the suspicion that the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt on the 17th of December 1967, while he was swimming off the ocean beach of Portsea, had not occurred accidentally. A story published in the Sunday Observer in early 1968, claimed that Holt had been assassinated by the CIA,

because he intended to pull Australia out of Vietnam. Holt had been Minister of Immigration from 1949 to 1956 and in that capacity he had given impulse to the mass immigration program that allowed hundreds of thousands of Italians, oppressed by the profound economic hardship caused by the war, to rebuild their lives in Australia.

The social and political climate of the nation was pervaded by subtle restlessness. The myth of Australia "terra felix" – that is white, angloceltic and pleased with itself – was broken by the impact of new languages, new customs and new mentalities introduced in the country by mass migration from the south and the east of Europe.

The government was finally convinced to abandon the shameful White Australia Policy. The new prime minister John Gorton, an eccentric man whose ideas and demeanour did not befit the conservatism of his party, turned out to be an advocate of the arts. After taking office, one of its first initiatives was to establish the Australian Council for the Arts,

the Australian Film Development Corporation and the National Film and Television Training School.

Donald Home, the most acute and controversial Australian intellectual of that time – famous as the author of *The Lucky Country*, a book in which he criticised the cultural torpidity of the Australian people – described that interim period between the long era of the Menzies government and the short but intense years of the Whitlam government, as "a time of hope".

In 1968, Australia had 12 million inhabitants, 290 thousand of whom were Italian immigrants. The overwhelming majority of the 120,000 who had settled in Victoria lived and worked in Melbourne. They came from small rural centres in the South and North-East of Italy and it was as if an entire Italian city had moved to Melbourne, populating working-class suburbs like Fitzroy, Northcote, Brunswick. Richmond and Essendon, today strongly revalued in the real estate market.

The settlement phase, despite the persistent unease of the local population, had come to an end. A large part of Italian immigrants, both men and women, had entered the labour market and achieved a reasonable degree of prosperity, but there were problems of social isolation and poor access to social welfare services, mostly due to their very limited English proficiency.





CO.AS.IT.'s Ladies Committee, 1978



CO.AS.IT.'s Board members meet the then State Minister for Housing Jeff Kennett, 1979

The group of volunteers who, on the initiative of the entrepreneur and philanthropist Gualtiero Vaccari and his wife Elda, founded CO.AS.IT. in 1968, managed to bring such problems to the attention of both Australian and Italian

authorities and to obtain some funding which, although initially small, allowed the employment of a social worker.

It is not the purpose of this publication to recall the events that marked those first years of activity. This may be dealt

with in a book dedicated to the entire history of CO.AS.IT. but, to highlight the difficulties that the founders encountered in setting up a welfare service meeting the requirements of law, here it will suffice to recount that in 1968 there was no Italian speaking social worker in Melbourne and there was no choice but to employ an English speaking one.

This made necessary the use of an interpreter, a task that was accomplished with great dedication and professionalism by Gina Triaca, who died five years ago at the age of 94 and whose mother Amelia Musso had emigrated to Australia in 1904 at the age of fifteen.

Gina Triaca, like almost all of those who contributed to the establishment of CO.AS.IT., belonged to the ranks of Italians born in or migrated to Australia in the first three decades of the last century. Their number was far below that of the great immigration wave of the 1950s and 60s.

In the 1933 census – the last held before the Second World War – 26,756 respondents declared to be born in Italy, a modest number compared to the more than 288,000 counted in the 1971 census. However, the pre-war cohort played a crucial role, not adequately recognized by social historians, assisting Italian migrants when they first arrived and facilitating their settlement.

Among those who helped CO.AS.IT. grow as a welfare agency, in addition to the aforementioned Vaccari couple, a special mention must be made of Concetta Benn, born in Melbourne in 1929. Her parents, Antonio and Maddalena Megna, came from the Aeolian Islands. Concetta Benn was a pioneer in the field of social work in Victoria and, within her busy schedule as a social justice policy maker for the State Labor Party and a standard-bearer of the "Brotherhood of St Laurence", she found time to dedicate to CO.AS.IT. as vice-president.

She formulated a new principle for the management of social work called the "Developmental Approach" which still inspires the work of CO.AS.IT. and many other welfare agencies.

Concetta Benn contributed decisively, through her experience and her knowledge of the state apparatus, to lay the foundations on which CO.AS.IT. has built the whole set of its welfare and cultural services becoming one of the most dynamic community organization in Melbourne's multicultural scenario.

Another figure who also belongs to the generation of Italian-Australians born in or migrated to Australia before the Second World War, and who stands out for his long-standing patronage of CO.AS.IT., is Sir James Gobbo. He succeeded Elda Vaccari as president, a position that, despite his intense professional activity, first as a barrister and then as a judge of the Supreme Court, he held during the years of the expansion of CO.AS.IT.'s activities. This happened when the Italian Historical Society and the management of Italian language classes in primary schools were added to the social welfare services.

Many others, who held the office of president or were members of the steering committee, would deserve to be mentioned, as well as the staff members who, through their work, have allowed the welfare, social and cultural programs to be implemented successfully.

The list would be long and, as already observed, transcends the purpose of this publication. Nevertheless, another person warrants a commendation after more than forty of years of outstanding leadership as CO.AS.IT.'s executive director.

That person is Giancarlo Martini-Piovano, whose experience in Australia, since he arrived when he was just over thirty-years old, largely coincides with his work at CO.AS.IT. which he performed with earnestness, vision and spirit of service. His legacy will be a solid organization, well-suited to face the challenges of the future, not least that – as exciting as it is demanding – of fostering and nurturing a bond with the Italian language and culture among the descendants of the many Italian migrants who, during the last century, helped make this nation one of the most advanced, industrious and hospitable democracies in the world.



One of CO.AS.IT.'s outdoor events. From left: Joan Kirner (Premier of Victoria), Caroline Hogg (Minister for Community Services), Sir James Gobbo, Mario Alberto Montecalvo (Consul General of Italy), Bernard Bongiorno, Franco Schiavoni and Bruna Pasqua



CO.AS.IT.'s Executive Director, Giancarlo Martini-Piovano, in a meeting with Melbourne's Lord Mayor and Councillor Ralph Bernardi





Four women who contributed to the development of CO.AS.IT.'s role in the community. From left: Linda Muscat, Vernon Hillman, Gina Triaca and Maria Tence

CO.AS.IT. AND THE ADVENT OF MULTICULTURALISM

Australia today boasts one of the most advanced social welfare systems in the world, however, at the time of CO.AS.IT.'s foundation the situation was very different.

Welfare services were minimal and the few available were hardly accessible to immigrants who, when necessary, helped each other rather than seeking assistance from public institutions. Not knowing English, they kept away from them but there

were also people who relied on their young children to act as their interpreters in the vain hope of receiving attention and some form of help.

Australia was experiencing a period of full employment and great economic development and there was no pressure on the government to engage more in the field of social welfare. However, among immigrants, mostly Italians and Greeks, cases of people living in desperate conditions

began to emerge.

Mothers or fathers, for example, who got sick and being unable to work, could not support their families. Or people who suffered accidents at work and did not know how to assert their rights.

Medicare did not exist yet and those who had to be treated in a hospital, if they did not have private health insurance, had to resort to the savings accumulated over years of hard work.



A group of children of different ethnic backgrounds of the junior team of the Italian Bocce Association

It was not due to a mere change of heart that of the over 360,000 Italians who migrated to Australia between the post-war years and the beginning of the 1970s, more than 90,000 decided to repatriate.

Social historians tend to believe that they did it because they felt homesick and could not stay away from the places where they were born and had strong ties of blood and kinship.

Certainly, all this motivated some of them but the vast majority went back to Italy on account of the hardship they experienced and for

being left out in the cold.

At that time immigrants were required to assimilate with the local population, adopting its customs, culture and language. Keeping oneself tied to one's language and culture meant to marginalize oneself from the mainstream society and fall into a condition of social inferiority.

Right from its establishment, CO.AS.IT. aimed to make welfare services, not only accessible, but also adapted to the linguistic and cultural reality of Italians, and to provide for them through public funding. This required a constant

and effective work of advocacy within the government.

This effort, combined with that of other community institutions, such as the Italian media, the Italian associations, the Church, and the trade unions, has gradually contributed to change the social climate of Australia and to the affirmation of multiculturalism.

Nevertheless, it was not easy to reach such a reality.

It took a long gestation, accompanied by a constant civil commitment, often carried out behind the scenes.





Young Italian migrants arriving at Station Pier, Melbourne

This year of the CO.AS.IT. 50th anniversary offers the opportunity to disclose some aspects, known only to a small circle of people, some of whom have disappeared, concerning the work of CO.AS.IT. in the crucial years of the political debate on multiculturalism.

In 1977, after his second victory in the federal elections, Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, at the suggestion of Petro Georgiou, his main political advisor, called a public inquiry to verify the living conditions and the specific needs of immigrant ethnic communities.

The inquiry was entrusted to the criminal lawyer Frank Galbally, known for having successfully defended in 1961 eleven immigrants, including

some Italians, accused of having instigated the riot of Bonegilla, a migrant camp 300 km from Melbourne, where immigrants were housed and confined, whilst waiting to find employment. The wait in many cases was prolonged to such an extent as to trigger episodes of anger and revolt.

At the end of 1978 there was a change at the top of the CO.AS.IT. board of directors.

At the annual general meeting, unexpectedly, Elda Vaccari lost her seat in the board and James Gobbo was elected to the presidency. He had left the legal practice a few months earlier to take up the position of judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

With Gobbo in the role of president and Martini in that of executive director, an era of great expansion and diversification of the services of CO.AS.IT. began.

The high reputation enjoyed by Gobbo at the institutional level and the administrative and strategic skills of Martini allowed CO.AS.IT. to expand its role.

The CO.AS.IT.'s leadership actively participated in the Galbally survey. During the consultations, Martini had the opportunity of meeting Petro Georgiou and established friendly relations with him.

The two developed a strong cooperation based on their common commitment to bring the government closer to the needs of immigrants.

Petro Georgiou who had been the inspiring soul of the Galbally inquiry, worked a lot in the background to ensure that the inquiry produced concrete results. And, in fact, the “Galbally Report” consisted of 57 recommendations, almost all of which were accepted and enacted by the Fraser government, marking the advent of the multiculturalism policy with a first allocation of 50 million dollars that allowed the immigrant communities to begin receiving specific social welfare programs and to begin the long process of integration into the wider Australian society.

One of the crucial points, emerging from the cooperation between Petro Georgiou and Giancarlo Martini-Piovano, which was to determine the expansion of the services and staff of CO.AS.IT., was the inclusion among the recommendations of the Galbally Report of the proposal for the government to finance classes of Italian language in primary schools.

CO.AS.IT. had already introduced the teaching of Italian in some primary schools but, as the funds available were very limited, the program was limited to very few schools.

The proposal formulated in the “Galbally Report” met some objections from the Federal Minister of Education, who did not accept the idea of funding a language teaching program in public schools for a specific group of pupils.

The minister wrongly believed that only the pupils of Italian origin would have had access to the courses included.

Gobbo and Martini left for Canberra and during a meeting with the minister in question they explained that the program was accessible



Museo Italiano is part of Multicultural Museums of Victoria, which recently won the Museums Australia's award for Medium Museums for the Grandmothers Project

to pupils without any distinction, thus releasing the impasse. In that circumstance as in many others, the authority of Gobbo was a decisive factor in breaking down obstacles and prejudices.

After funding was finally approved, Coasit started looking for as many Italian language teachers as possible, organized qualification courses approved by the state ministry of education and was able to offer all interested schools the opportunity to introduce the teaching of Italian without having to bear any costs.

Coasit directly managed the program for many years until Italian became part of the state primary school curriculum.

Since 1981, the year in which

the program began, hundreds of thousands of children of all ethnic origins have been able to learn the first rudiments of our language and a significant number of them to continue their study in secondary colleges and university graduate schools.





PRESENT AND FUTURE OF CO.AS.IT.'S AGED CARE SERVICES FOR ELDERLY ITALIANS

There are a variety of aged care services for elderly Italians performed by CO.AS.IT. on the basis of the medical and economic conditions of those who qualify to receive them.

During its fifty years of activity, CO.AS.IT., in addition to constantly striving to make its services respond to the clients' needs, has periodically made them compliant with the changing delivery criteria set by the government. An exacting

task that often implies reallocating resources and fine-tuning the work of social workers and service operators.

Being subsidized by the government, independent welfare agencies are subject, not only to recurring regulatory changes, but also to cuts in funding, or even to the cancellation of certain services.

CO.AS.IT. has made up for such situations thanks to a wise management of funds that has

allowed the services to continue and sometimes to expand, using, where necessary, the revenues of a subsidiary company, called ItalCare, which employs operators specialized in the delivery of home care services for the disabled and the elderly on behalf of CO.AS.IT. as well as of any other public or private welfare organization.

Lately, the government radically changed the criteria for the provision of aged care services.



Italian elderly attending a film screening organised by CO.AS.IT. as part of the Victorian Seniors Festival

Since then, it is necessary to register with the government agency “My Aged Care” on the dedicated website www.myagedcare.gov.au or by calling 1800 200 422 for one’s needs and eligibility to receive government-funded services to be assessed.

The first phase of the registration concerns the assessment of the medical and economic conditions of the applicant on the basis of which one is assigned to one of three categories of aged care packages. Each category provides for a level of annual expenditure to be paid by the government.

However, the procedure does not guarantee immediate access to the services. The funds allocated by the government are not unlimited and people may have to wait for their turn to receive the services.

The main innovation brought about by the new system is that it is now



up to the elderly to choose the agency that will provide the services, a prerogative that has introduced the principle of competition in the field of social welfare.

Elvira Andreoli and Rocchina Di Giuseppe with three members of a day care centre





A celebration in honour of the then newly-appointed Governor of Victoria, Sir James Gobbo with, from left, Gabriella Gomersall-Hubbard, Giancarlo Martini-Piovano, Bruna Pasqua, Bianca Baldassi, Sir James Gobbo and Frank Di Blasi

Thanks to the facilities and staff at its disposal, CO.AS.IT. has seen the number of elderly clients grow, confirming itself as one of Victoria's most reputable ethnic welfare organizations.

The battles sustained to allow elderly Italian immigrants to receive aged care services from qualified people who speak their language and are familiar with their cultural heritage have been won. Yet, another crucial test looms on the horizon.

The first generation of Italian immigrants is gradually disappearing and to remain relevant as a provider of aged care services, CO.AS.IT.

will need to adapt its services to the needs of a new Australian-born generation of elderly.

The Italian language, for example, will no longer have a fundamental role in the provision of services and the cultural factor will be of less consequence.

It will be a question of how much the Italian cultural identity will continue to affect the offspring of the first generation. Obviously their attachment to their origins will not be as strong as that of their parents but it might still exercise some influence in their way of living the autumn of their existence.

Old age often generates an inner

reality, hardly perceived in the other stages of adult life, which tends to reconnect people with the early part of their life when they were most receptive to their parents' cultural heritage. It is as if the two extremes - beginning and end - get reunited.

This is a key element that will determine CO.AS.IT.'s aged care services in the future together with its equally important role as a major Italian-Australian cultural institution.

CO.AS.IT. ITALIAN LANGUAGE COURSES FOR ADULTS

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CO.AS.IT. has been involved in the
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adultclasses@coasit.com.au





Federal Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, Alan Tudge, visiting the Italian Historical Society

THE ITALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, CO.AS.IT.'S JEWEL IN THE CROWN

One of the less visible, yet a jewel in the crown of CO.AS.IT., is the Italian Historical Society (IHS). It too has come of age having been born 37 years ago on the initiative of the then president, Sir James Gobbo.

In his autobiography, "Something to declare", published in 2010, Gobbo explains with few but incisive words, what moved him to establish the IHS. "I always felt it was important to record the story of Italian migrants, but I wanted it to be part of the total story-and not some sad, separate ethnic museum with tired memorabilia, open only one day a month".

The IHS came therefore into being with the chief purpose of placing the story of Italian immigration within the wider context of the history of Australia.



It is no coincidence that the first project put in place was a photographic exhibition on the Italians who arrived in Victoria before the great immigration wave of the 1950s/60s.

Entitled "Victoria's Italians 1900-1945", the exhibition was staged at the Victoria State Library in 1985, the year of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Melbourne and it gave ample evidence that the Italian presence in Victoria went a long way back in time and was closely interconnected with the history of this State.

It was only the beginning of an iconographic endeavour that, three years later, will be followed by an even more ambitious exhibition included in the celebrations of Australia's Bicentenary.

"Australia's Italians 1788-1988" was again held at the State Library

and opened by the then governor general, Sir Ninian Stephen, on April 18, 1988. It then was exhibited in other cities of Australia and was later sent to Italy to be shown in places where most Italian-born migrants come from.

Several large photographic panels that were part of that exhibition were permanently placed at the Assisi Centre in Rosanna and others at the Australian embassy in Rome.

A beautiful volume, published in 2005 with the title "Per l'Australia - the story of Italian Migration", has subsequently emerged from this exhibition.

In 1992, the IHS opened another perspective on the past mounting together with the Jewish Museum another major exhibition entitled "Bridging Two Worlds - Jews, Italians and Carlton".

"It was a most imaginative exhibition - recalls Gobbo in his autobiographical book - as it reproduced a series of streetscapes and shops in Carlton with their adjoining Jewish and Italian proprietors."

The exhibition highlighted how the presence of Jews and Italians in Carlton in the years preceding the second world war, had the effect of vivifying Carlton while Lygon Street was taking on the Italian connotations that today make it one of Melbourne's most popular streets.

But beyond these evocative exhibitions, the IHS has been performing the silent and equally important task of cataloguing documents, correspondence, photographs and various other items that make up the largest amount of records on Italian immigration in Australia.





Governor of Victoria, The Hon. Linda Dessau AC, welcomed by Sir James Gobbo, Rhonda Barro and Ferdinando Colarossi, during a visit to CO.AS.IT.

The IHS also cooperates with various Australian museums and other institutions such as the National Library of Australia whose electronic archive is connected to the photographic collection (about 8,000 images) preserved by the IHS. Additional memorabilia, including hundreds of oral history recordings, a thousand family history files, eight thousand documents from the Italian Embassy and thousands of personal records of almost all the Italian civilians interned during the second world war, are held by the IHS.

The IHS is managed by Elizabeth Triarico, a specialist in the field, born in Australia from Italian parents. With



the help of an assistant, Elizabeth is organizing an updated archival system and has started a collection of video-

recorded interviews with people who have a significant migration story to tell.



Italian language teachers attending a professional development course in CO.AS.IT.'s Resource Centre

MAKING ITALIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE AN INTEGRAL PART OF AUSTRALIA'S SOCIETY

Italian language teaching and the promotion of Italian culture are essential constituents of CO.AS.IT.'s work. In fact, the role of social welfare goes beyond the material needs of people. This point is expressed with few but incisive words in the Christian motto: "Man does not live by bread alone".

In order for Italian immigrants – as well as for those of other nationalities – to feel at home in Australia, it was not only essential that they had full access to social welfare services, but also that their language, their culture and even their own history, be seen as part of the reality of nation.





Consequently, CO.AS.IT. did not limit its work to the provision of welfare services. It was necessary to add to them activities of a cultural nature that would give distinction to the Italian presence in Australia's multicultural context. The Department of Language and Culture performs this task in several ways.

First among them is the support given to the teaching of Italian through a Resource Centre which began to operate when CO.AS.IT. introduced and managed the program of Italian language classes in public and private primary schools.

After the classes passed under the control of the State Department of

Education, CO.AS.IT. has acquired an even more important role as a creator and supplier of a wide range of resources that allow teachers to learn new educational approaches, undertake new paths, improve teaching practices and share their experiences.

Among the various support activities for teachers, the Resource Centre publishes three times a year a language teaching resource titled "Orizzonti". This publication is made available to teachers online or printed and offers them strategies on how to combine language learning with topics of specific interest to children, such as nutrition, health and the protection of the natural environment.

The well-known TV personality and writer, Santo Cilauro, with staff of the Resource Centre. From left: Claudia MacLean, Elsa Paulin and Lusiana Livolti



State Minister of Education, James Merlino, with the group of Italian Language Assistants, Giancarlo Martini-Piovano and Ferdinando Colarossi

Children also have the possibility of attending the CO.AS.IT.'s "Doposcuola - After school hour Community Language School".

Every Saturday morning during the school year, hundreds of children, aged between 5 and 17 years, jostle through the entrance to the afterschool classes located at the rear of CO.AS.IT.'s building. They represent the future of our language in this country.

A future that will certainly not be able to replicate the present nor the past when hundreds of thousands of Italian immigrants populated entire suburbs of Melbourne. However, judging by the large number of children attending the Italian

classes in schools and CO.AS.IT.'s afterschool, our language does not seem destined to a bleak future.

Italian language teaching is also extended to adults. In fact, a language school for adults with day and evening classes for every level of learning is in operation at CO.AS.IT.

Lessons are attended by over two hundred people, mostly English-speaking, attracted by Italian as one of the great languages of the West and for the cultural enrichment it generates.

Another form of support to Italian teaching in Victorian schools is through the CO.AS.IT.'s Italian Language Assistant Program.

About thirty young Italian graduates





Christmas Party 2017: teachers, CO.AS.IT. staff and volunteers

arrive each year from Italy as part of an agreement between CO.AS.IT., the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with a selection process carried out by some of the major Italian universities. They work alongside teachers of Italian, helping them deliver authentic language and cultural experiences to students. They also cooperate in the development of study units based on topics chosen from year to year.

The history of Italian immigration to Australia, with particular regard to the Italians who settled in Melbourne and across Victoria also falls within the functions of the Department of Language and Culture. Together with the Italian Historical Society, the Italian Museum in Carlton plays a valuable role in promoting

the knowledge of the history of our community, especially among primary and secondary school pupils.

Created with funds made available by the state government, the Museo Italiano presents a history of the Italian presence in Victoria from the colonial era to the present day. Audio-visual documentaries and a variety of objects including household and work tools, various artefacts and musical instruments, offer a glimpse of the lifestyle of Italian immigrants of time past.

Finally, the Department of Language and Culture carries out a program of conferences, exhibitions and events concerning the rich cultural heritage of Italy and highlighting aspects that, in various ways and forms, permeate the life of today's Australian society.

AN ITALIAN MUSEUM IN THE HEART OF CARLTON



Faraday Street
packed with people
at the opening of
Museo Italiano
in Carlton

CO.AS.IT. MUSEO ITALIANO



CO.AS.IT.'s 50TH ANNIVERSARY

AN ITALIAN MUSEUM IN THE HEART OF CARLTON



Located in the heart of Carlton (Melbourne's "Little Italy"), Museo Italiano is a modern exhibition space in which a permanent exhibition rich in audio-visuals tells the story of Italian migration to Australia, with a special focus on the State of Victoria and the district of Carlton. The exhibition showcases the diverse contribution that Italian migrants and their families made to Australia in terms of culture, society and entrepreneurship, and explores the formation and evolution of a new Italian Australian culture.

Established in 2010 thanks to funds allocated by the Victorian State Government within the Cultural Precincts Enhancement Project, Museo Italiano draws from the stories and items in the collections of CO.AS.IT.'s Italian Historical Society.

The Museo is loved by our community, whose story it tells. It nurtures community pride and strengthens our multicultural identity. The Museo attracts many visitors from all the communities that form Melbourne's diverse socio-cultural make up.

Mother and child celebrating the inauguration of CO.AS.IT.'s Museo Italiano

An integral part of CO.AS.IT.'s Italian Language, Culture and Heritage Department, the Museo Italiano is a favourite destination for students from primary to VCE on school excursions.

Students take part in the classes delivered by Department staff and use expressly prepared educational resources.

AN ITALIAN MUSEUM IN THE HEART OF CARLTON



The music show entertaining people at the official opening of Museo Italiano



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CO.AS.IT's 50TH ANNIVERSARY



A VISITATION PROGRAM HELPING OUR ELDERLY TO MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

For many people in old age, isolation and loneliness represent the bitter reality that often hides behind the bright conditions of life offered by Australia.

As long as the aged are not confined to their homes, Australia offers a high quality of life. The low population density, the houses surrounded by greenery, the cleanliness of the streets and public spaces and the tranquillity of the social climate, make this country one of the most liveable in the world.

**Group of volunteers
of the home visitation
program awarded
a certificate for
outstanding service**



Italians who migrated here in bygone years, today are enviously looked at by their compatriots in Italy for being fortunate enough to live in a sort of Eden where nothing is missing and life runs smoothly without the social and economic problems afflicting their native land.

These privileges, however, are eventually paid with the loneliness people fall into in the latter part of their life when the infirmity of age deprives them of the freedom of movement cutting them off from any possibility of socializing.

The geographical dispersion of housing ends up condemning old people to isolation and the sense of

alienation that derives from it.

CO.AS.IT. has not remained insensitive to this reality and, among the various welfare services rendered to the Italian community, oversees one specifically designed to make such reality less oppressive.

It is the home visitation program that is carried out by volunteers who make themselves available to provide some company and moral support to the elderly Italians who live across Melbourne's metropolitan area including those who reside in nursing homes and whose children and grandchildren often neglect to visit them.

Participants in a special event dedicated to the home visitation program as part of the National Volunteers Week





Volunteers attending a training course

The program avails itself of over two hundred volunteer visitors and employs a few coordinators who have the task of selecting the volunteers, assigning them the people to be visited, making sure that they follow the legal requirements and carry out all the bureaucratic procedures prescribed by the government authorities funding the program.

CO.AS.IT. is grateful to this small army of benevolent people who, with commendable spirit of solidarity, carry on this program that helps many people out of the gloom of loneliness in the latter and most difficult period of their existence.

A quartet of coordinators of the home visitation program





Participants in CO.AS.IT.'s day care centre groups enjoy free transportation by taxi from and to their place of residence

FINDING ENJOYMENT IN LIFE IN OLD AGE

In addition to the home visitations program, elderly Italians who live alone or, although assisted by their family members, do not have the possibility to socialize because of their physical impairments, CO.AS.IT. offers the opportunity to spend one day a week in the company of their peers in day care centres for seniors operating in the Melbourne metropolitan area.

The benefits that the elderly receive from this program are notable in every respect. In these centres, in fact, they recover their ability to communicate and interact with others, rediscover the pleasure of being in good company making friends and sharing interests, experiences and memories.





A few members of the day care centre group of Essendon

Every aspect of the day spent in these centres is taken care of down to the smallest detail by qualified CO.AS.IT. staff who are at the complete disposal of the elderly group members and organize for them various types of leisure activities aimed at reducing the burden of their ailments and increasing their will to live.

Participants in this program don't have to worry about anything, not even how to reach the day care centre. Transport is free and organized by the staff using taxis that pick them from their homes in the early morning and, at the end of the day spent at the centre, take them back home. The program also provides for the participants to be served breakfast and a full lunch with typical Italian dishes.

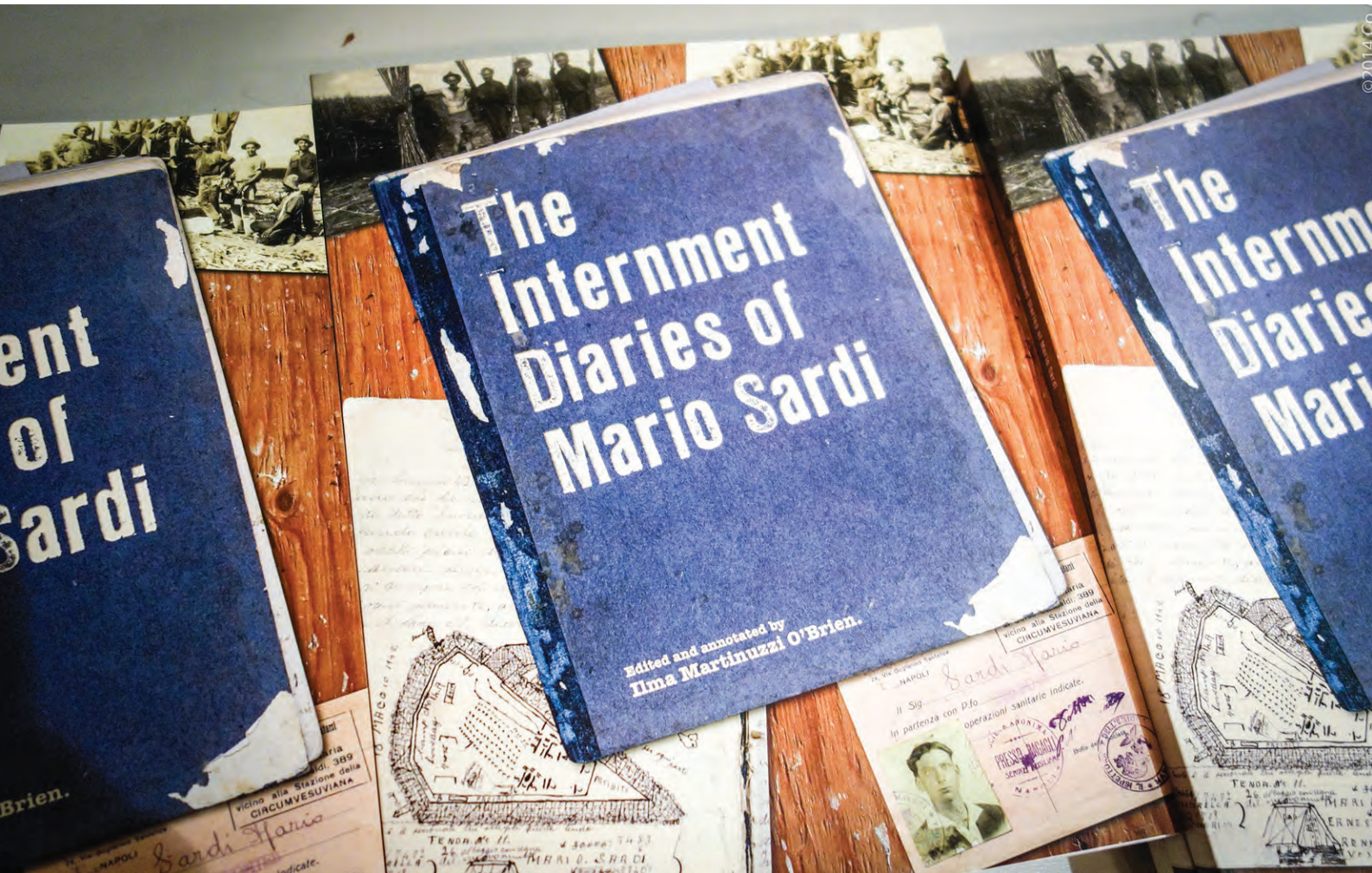
This service is also beneficial to the elderlies' family members who, one day a week, are relieved of the task of tending them.



A friendly chat between two members of a day care centre group

CO.AS.IT.'s day care centres for the elderly operate in Rosanna, Essendon, Burwood East, Knox and Coburg and are distributed in such a way as to cover a wide swathe of the Melbourne metropolitan area.

With the exception of the Rosanna Centre, which is located in a wing of the Centro Assisi permanently leased by CO.AS.IT., the other centres use premises that are made available for hire by Italian social clubs.



CO.AS.IT. CULTURAL PROGRAMS

A book of an Italian
internee during World
War II presented at
CO.AS.IT.

CO.AS.IT. runs a vibrant cultural
program which includes temporary
exhibitions and events, including
talks, presentations, workshops,
film screenings, theatre evenings,
live music shows, community

consultations, debates, conferences
etc. The program is designed to
engage the community and to support
and coordinate community testimony,
literary and artistic expression and
professional research.



CO.AS.IT.'s 50TH ANNIVERSARY



Italian bicycle culture figured in one of the cultural events at CO.AS.IT.

An integral component of CO.AS.IT.'s Italian Language, Culture and Heritage Department, the cultural programs aim to provide on an ongoing basis a welcoming space and a safe platform for intergenerational dialogue, intercultural exchange,

lifelong learning, ongoing community cultural engagement, innovative and experimental creative practices, robust and respectful discussion, collaborations and exchange of ideas among and between academics, the education community and the

community at large.

CO.AS.IT.'s cultural programs include collaborations with scholars, artists and institutions (universities, museums, study centres, cultural organisations, community associations) in Australia, in Italy and internationally.



Young people attending a cultural event

A celebration of
the Association of
Italian Pensioners
Clubs of Victoria



ASSOCIATION OF SENIOR ITALIAN CITIZENS' CLUBS OF VICTORIA

The Association of Senior Italian Citizens' Clubs of Victoria is constituted by over 80 senior citizens' clubs for Italian Australians operating throughout the Melbourne metropolitan areas and in several regional areas, including Mildura, Wangaratta, Myrtleford, Geelong, Ballarat, Morwell, Korumburra, Kyabram, Shepparton, Tatura, Rye and Wonthaggi. It is the largest Italian pensioner body in Australia.

Total membership of the groups is over 20,000. The Association was founded by CO.AS.IT. on the 8th of December 1983. The Presidents of the clubs meet regularly at the bi-monthly meetings of all Presidents in our Conference Centre to discuss and plan activities and/or projects according to the views and needs of club members.



CO.AS.IT.'s 50TH ANNIVERSARY



Women of the Senior Citizens Club of Ascot Vale with Deputy CEO Marco Fedi

This includes conferences on health, welfare and pensions, sporting and other socio-cultural initiatives of common interest to particular clubs, visits to historical places, the National Gallery of Victoria's special exhibitions, concerts and theatrical performances, information seminars and special group outings.

The Association operates under the auspices and financial assistance of CO.AS.IT. The objective is to provide members of all affiliated clubs assistance by referring them to social workers at CO.AS.IT. and/or other local, state and federal agencies for the care of the aged.

Qualified guest speakers are invited to visit the clubs to give talks on a number of topics of particular interest to older Italian Australians. The association strives to help improve the quality of life of older Italian Australians through representation and lobbying at all levels of Government in order to give them accessibility to mainstream services and infrastructures.



A monthly meeting of the Pensioners Association with the Italian Consul General, Gianni Bardini, as a special guest