

## Breath of hope

RELIEF for victims of the choking respiratory disease asthma may not be far off if new research sheds light on the mystery of how and why it develops. Scientists in South Australia recently began exploring a possibility that weather plays a leading role in the incidence of asthma.

They are working in close co-operation with weather bureau experts and are also employing spore traps at strategic sites to collect pollen and spore samples from the air.

None of this information may seem relevant or outstanding to some people because it is already generally accepted that climate is one of the main factors affecting asthma sufferers.

But men of medicine have remained non-committal about this theory, conceding only that it is likely.

Bankstown is the home of hundreds of people who suffer from asthma—many of them children, for whom an attack is an ever-present fear.

About six asthma cases are admitted to Bankstown Hospital each week in varying degrees of illness.

Not many asthmatics are such serious cases that they require frequent hospitalisation, but most find the illness a



"Mamma" Lena Gustin about to go on air with her 2CH programme. Arrivederci Roma. Standing with her are her husband Dino (left) and 2CH representative Friel Smith.

## 'Mamma' — their link with Italy

Take a pair of dark, serene eyes, add a motherly figure of small stature and a quiet voice that speaks precise halting English — and you have "Mamma" Lena Gustin.

Who is Mamma Lena?

Try asking a teenager who the Rolling Stones are — you can expect the same reaction from

her programme Arrivederci Roma is heard throughout the east coast of Australia.

She is respected and loved by an estimated

ade" sessions, and exudes a warmth all her own.

Mamma Lena and her husband, Dino, who produces all her radio shows, do much of the research and background work at their home in South Terrace, Bankstown.

Each morning at about six, one of the regularly monitored for Lena's night-time radio "appearances", five nights a week.

A large collection of Italian recorded music is also stored in a special reference file at her home.

She takes special delight in presenting the latest pop tunes to her audience.

Mamma Lena is almost a legend among the Italian community — her affectionate nickname grew out of praise by fans that she was "the mother of Australia's Italians".

The compliment is not given lightly.

### Assistance and advice

Her assistance and advice to migrants settling into the Australian way of life has earned her a reputation as a real and sensitive person.

Not content with what she can do to help people through her radio programme, Lena often makes personal calls.

In 1967, though then an Australian citizen, she was awarded Italy's second highest honour, the Cross of the Clav-

alliers, for her help to Italian migrants.

She was awarded an MBE by the Queen in the following year.

A strikingly warm personality and quick wit, Lena's interest in her work is full time — for her it is a way of life.

Yet when Lena and Dino arrived in Australia, fluent French and Spanish.

### Wrote for "La Fiamma"

Soon after her arrival she began writing for "La Fiamma", Sydney's Italian language newspaper, and before long was organising three

— some weeks I receive hundreds of letters, others thousands.

"The Minister for Immigration, Mr. Snedden, Premier, Mr. Askin, Mr. Whitlam, and Member for Bankstown, Mr. Kearns have been very helpful."

On the tenth anniversary of "Arrivederci Roma", last year, each more easily into the Australian community.

Mr. Askin: "Her efforts to help Italians become better informed Australian citizens have won wide commendation and the recognition of two nations

Mr. Kearns: "Without

## PAGE TWO FEATURE

women's pages, with advice columns answering readers' problems, and a cookery section.

Then she was invited to run a programme on Sydney radio station 2SM.

Later she switched to 2CH, and in 1959 she started "Arrivederci Roma", which has been on the air regularly ever since.

Nowadays Lena presents a total of 18 Italian radio programmes each week.

"My husband produces the programmes and I do the announcing," she said.

"We are a team really because it is too much to do for one person.

"I receive a lot of letters with problems from listeners to be answered

people like her the problems facing new arrivals to our country would be extremely difficult, if not insurmountable."

Mamma Lena has brought to hundreds of thousands of Italian migrants the one thing our national immigration programme cannot supply: the personality, the music, the day to day news of their former homeland.

For although she is a naturalised Australian, Lena Gustin still thinks and talks as an Italian.

As she told the Observer, "What I cannot explain to you by talking, I can tell you by the hands, or you can read it in my face."

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