



Radio Italo-Australiana

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MEDIA AND COMMUNITY RELEASE

The dramatic changes in the radio broadcasting field foreshadowed by the Department of the Media, the Priority Review Staff, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board and other Government instrumentalities have found resounding echo in the media and the community at large and have stirred a great number of groups (ethnic, cultural, etc.) into action.

The lack of pre-existing criteria, and the scarcity of specific information, have made it difficult for most of these groups to formulate precise schemes.

The Italian community, the largest ethnic group and also one of the most disadvantaged from a social and cultural viewpoint, has formed into an independent association called R.I.A. Radio Italo-Australiana in order to apply for a radio broadcasting licence. R.I.A. is backed by a Foundation Committee consisting of over 150 members of the community (business leaders, teachers, professional men, private individuals, delegates from clubs and associations, etc.) and by tens of thousands of members of the community who have indicated their approval of the R.I.A. project by signing petition forms. This project, revealed by the media some months ago, was formally and officially launched on November 2 ult. in the presence of the Foundation Committee, the Italian Consul General for NSW, Dr Giuseppe Altomare, and observers from the Department of the Media, the Priority Review Staff, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board, the Film and Television Board of the Australian Council for the Arts, the Public Broadcasting Association and the Music Broadcasting Society of NSW.

The Shadow Minister for Immigration, the Hon. MJR McKellar, M.H.R., was also present and the Minister for Labour and Immigration, Mr Clyde R. Cameron, M.H.R., who was in Brisbane, sent a telegram of apologies which was publicly acknowledged and read: "... I do wish the Radio Italo Australiana every success and regret I cannot be there to launch this project."

Despite the paucity of the guidelines available, R.I.A. has drafted a scheme which could offer directives for the guidance of others. It respects the need of community participation and involvement by providing a co-operative structure and a series of committees which would plan, implement and control programming and operations. It considers the needs of other ethnic minorities, numerically insufficient and financially weak, by fostering their participation and/or by intending to provide access to them. It realistically appraises the impossibility of a single radio station catering for all ethnic groups, but rather than egotistically pool its resources with the second largest ethnic group after the Italian, the Greek community, suggests that these two groups form the nuclei of two separate entities, each surrounded by an equal share of all the other ethnic minorities. It further realises that the financial strain on government funds, at this moment, could not be welcome and intends to fund the project and run it on its own resources. The inaugural speech by the Chairman of R.I.A., Mr Pino Bosi, provides an answer to all questions asked, and even to some not yet formulated.

The R.I.A. project inaugural speech by Mr Pino Bosi

When the first few of us gathered together early this year following the first reports, indications, forecasts regarding the possible introduction of FM broadcasting and the possible extension of AM broadcasting, it was like trying to piece together a complex jigsaw puzzle with only a handful of pieces at our disposal. But one thing was clear: a new era was opening up for Australia. A new era for the people of Australia, because they were going to be afforded the opportunity of becoming personally involved in the running of their lives, in the forging of their opinions and in the expression of their ideas. And when I say Australians, I also include the odd three million people whose birthplace was not this country, but whose children were either born or would be born under the Southern Cross. And particularly those Australians of such diverse background whose mother tongue was not English and who, because of this specific reason, can be classed as a section of underprivileged Australians, the pariahs, the outcasts of culture, people condemned to a permanent or semi-permanent state of isolation except for those who could master English to such a degree that really only a small minority can ever hope to attain.

We saw the great potential of an ethnic radio station: we saw the possibility of reaching into the hundreds and hundreds of homes where Italian mothers and wives, our women, possibly the greatest victims and martyrs of migration (and anyone who cares to find out will discover the high incidence of depression among them, the high incidence of mental problems) we saw the possibility of reaching them and teaching them English, of describing to them this country, of affording them the opportunity of a talk-back programme on which they could, in their own language, the only language they know, they could express their fears, their thoughts. And we thought of what great solace it could be for their men, coming home from work, to be able to listen to a play, a sporting commentary, a quiz show, in a language in which they too could participate either directly or at least by understanding the question and at least mentally provide the answer.

Once the English writer Chesterton, seeing the lights of New York for the first time, said how strangely exciting it was to be confronted with such an unusual visual experience, to hear such a different rhythm of sounds. He also said it was almost frightening. But has it occurred to everyone to imagine what sort of a nightmare this must be to people to whom all these signs appear spelt backwards? Or what an obsession all these sounds can become if they appear to be played backwards? Not only at work but also at home, 24 hours a day? Sure. People learn. At least a little. Some things go a little easier as time goes by, but must that be enough? Must they be condemned to be permanently forced to make themselves only half understood or to only half understand?

In the olden days it was propounded that this was the sacrifice a migrant had to pay for the right to earn himself a living, maybe even prosperity, while contributing in no mean way in making this country richer, stronger, a more adult nation among so many other adult

nations. But those were not enlightened days. Thank God and thanks to the good will of some men, we now live in a different climate. Sociologists have recognised that human ecology is of a great importance, if not greater, than the protection of the environment, and human ecology means the protection of social and cultural values, the fostering of human dignity in the widest sense.

We are gratified by Al Grassby's invention of the expression "family of nations", "cultural groups" rather than the obnoxious term "new Australians". But it is frustrating and, in the long run, damaging to coin such expressions if the culturally deprived members of this family of nations are denied the right of self-expression.

In the early sixties the Hon. Alas Downer, then Minister for Immigration, made a statement which few people really understood. He said that if Australia was to retain its Anglo Saxon characteristics it had to, paradoxically, open its doors to all ethnic groups and encourage the retention of all sorts of foreign cultures. It didn't seem to make sense: what, with millions of foreigners over-running the country speaking Babbleton, establishing the oddest customs, how could Australia remain Anglo Saxon in character? Very simply because any form of transplanted culture dies, withers away or becomes crystallised, becomes a stuffed parrot unless it remains justifiably alive in its clash or interaction with different cultural forces trying to prevail upon it. It may change slightly, but it remains dynamically alive. And this has come to pass and indeed, now that migration has been dramatically slashed, Australia's maturing, its ripening, its blossoming in a cultural sense will certainly be slowed down and maybe even arrested unless we reinforce the presence of so many cultures existing here in embryonic form. Because culture, creativity, and intellectual growth thrive on contrasts, clashes, comparisons. And despite the cinema, television and the fast inter-continental jet flights, Australia remains an antipodean country; a country at the other end of the world it belongs to.

Culture. It's a word that years ago was only spoken by academics. We can all talk of culture today because it doesn't mean to be able to quote Milton or offer a dissertation on the relative interpretation of Bacon's essay on friendship. It means to pursue life in a certain fashion, it means to argue in order to understand, it means to learn to express oneself, it means to be part of a mankind that is trying to move on. It means, above all, to be aware. What awareness do migrant children have of the validity of their parents' culture? None. Their parents neither have the time nor the necessary ability to convey it. They often don't have a language in common, and reports from the Italian welfare agency COASIT indicate that the number of cases of rebellion against parental authority is increasing. This is how it all started, the bad part I mean, the social upheavals recorded in the United States in the 20s and 30s. And what do these parents know of the world in

which their children live? Little, if anything, because they've never really been able to learn anything about it because nobody taught it to them in a language they could understand and so they reject it as a whole, widening further the already wide gap.

And what about husbands and wives, migrant husbands and wives? What's happening to them? They are breaking up at a faster rate ever recorded. Why? They've got a house, a car, maybe a little business, what's the problem? They're bored, that's the problem. The music of life (in their case the struggle, the fight, the hardship) has gone. They never had much time to learn to enjoy life. And so many of them decide, after spending some 20 years in Australia, to go and hear the music of life back home, taking with them their disappointment as well as their children and their life's savings, or profits of their endeavour. Now it's too late. Well, not really, but someone has to cater for them, in a special way, in a style and language they know and understand. In the same way that someone, like the Music Broadcasting Society for example, caters for the special needs of its members. And while rejoicing at the thought that the 1500 members of the Music Broadcasting Society have been granted a broadcasting licence, it is certainly not too much to ask that 150,000 migrants also be granted a licence. A foreign language would be used though, in fact more than one. But what's so very wrong with that?

Australians who study languages (and they are many...) would welcome it. The interest in languages, which had blossomed in Australia in the sixties, is gradually dying out (Italian is excepted, for some odd reason. Not only does it show a continuous increase at High School Certificate level, but also in private institutes and courses...). I have just returned from a series of lectures at Armidale University and I found the study of languages there flourishing, incredibly, beautifully.

Professor Ivan Borko, head of the French Department at Monash University, commenting on the increasing devotion with which languages are studied in most countries in the world, said, and I quote: "In this light, the present decline of foreign language teaching in Australia and in the United States appears to be a short-sighted, anachronistic and provincial phenomenon which cannot fail to put nations with monolingual elites at a considerable disadvantage and in clear cultural inferiority."

Does Australia fear Canada's diverting bilingual schizophrenia? For one it's exciting. Secondly it could never happen here. So many languages are already spoken here. Anyway the point is they are becoming more and more bastardised, neither meat nor fish. The recent report by Andrew Jakubowicz and Bernice Buckley (Migrants and the Legal System) indicated that 63% of all Italian migrants do not have an articulate command of their own language. It's a percentage which makes one shudder. You ought not to take it too literally. You know the story of the Saxon who was sacked because he could neither read nor write...

If the Italians had all been more literate they would have probably remained as poor as I am. Which, you well know, they are not, really. On a more serious note, even granting that many Italian migrants have lost part of their articulation in Italian, they have remained quite articulate in their regional dialects and, most certainly, in their mental capacities as their incredible success in so many diverse fields has shown.

But languages are forgotten and despoiled and ruined, and with them an ability to enjoy culture at any level. The loss of a language is cultural genocide and must be prevented. If you are to hear foreign languages spoken, and that you must if you are realistic, then at least hear them spoken as they should be spoken.

These are in essence the things we said in the course of our first meetings. Then the question sprang up: how are we going to do it? The simplest way would have been to call out to a few rich friends, big businessmen and form a company. We looked at each other in the face and didn't dare to go on: it would have killed our dreams. It would have killed the dream of a radio station not only established FOR the Italian community and other communities, but also RUN by them. It would have denied them the right to be considered adult, mature, involved. It would have also meant there's no denying it: giving them what privately owned ethnic radio stations give Canadian Italians and American Italians: musical pop and advertising corn for breakfast lunch and dinner. And whatever else comes easy, plentiful and cheap. So we opted for a co-operative, the most equitable, fair and democratic organisational form, with committees deciding (given due respect to usefulness of money) what the community wanted and what the community needed. We then admitted it was not reasonable to expect that only the Italians ought to have a radio station. And also that it would be impossible for all ethnic groups to be granted one. The obvious choice was a pairing of the Italian and the Greek communities, the two communities stronger both numerically and financially. The idea seemed very feasible, even fair, but only apparently so. Why? Because if the Italians and the Greeks were to get together, how were the other smaller minorities going to manage?

I suppose they could have all been put together in some sort of a tower of Babel relying on the Government for funds to establish another station and run it at a loss. That's not good economy. So we figured that if the Italians, as the largest non-British migrant group, set themselves up and offered access to lesser groups (preferably groups with compatible languages but also others reaching about fifty per cent of the migrant population within the broadcast area) the Greeks could do the same, providing the backbone for the other ethnic minorities representing the remainder of the migrant population. It may seem an easy pattern, a logic evolution of a thought now, but I can assure you it was not. And it wasn't easy mainly because every time we opened a newspaper, and we read there all, there were new conjectures, statements, hypotheses, contradictions, forecasts, denials with regards to new licences. Many of you are not aware of the implications of what I'm saying, but most of those sitting at this table know exactly what I mean.

I could now refer to a hundred statements to conclude this inordinately long speech. Let me take just one. It's from a paper delivered at the annual general meeting of the Music Broadcasting Society of NSW on July 30th this year by Mr Jeff Rushton, Assistant Secretary (Radio), Department of the Media. And I chose it because it outlines some sort of questions to which I am going to give very definite answers. Mr Rushton speaks of the criteria by which successful community service can be measured.

(1) Demonstration that a high proportion of the given population wishes to receive the service. . . In due course we shall be happy to exhibit the tens of thousands of signatures which have poured and keep on pouring into our office. They make a huge and impressive pile. Not to mention the fact that most of those attending this meeting today, doctors, businessmen, social workers, teachers, delegates of clubs and associations, private individuals are the living body of our organisations, they are the members of our Foundation Committee which shall fund, establish and run Radio Italo Australiana.

(2) Commercial self-sufficiency. . . The Italian community in Sydney supports at present one bi-weekly newspaper, two weekly newspapers, a monthly commercial bulletin, an enormous variety of irregular publications, one hour on television and over 16 hours of weekly radio broadcast. And there's plenty more money available, especially in form of institutionalised advertising from large firms for our welfare and educational programmes which, at present has not been tapped, yet. To give an idea of the financial self-sufficiency and reliance of our community, I shall recall but the one venture: The Scalabrini Villages for the Aged, which raised almost 150,000 dollars in two years from Community functions.

(3) The criteria of desired social benefit. . . It seems to me I should not say much more about this aspect. Courses in the English and in Italian languages, programmes on Australia, cultural programmes in English, access to welfare and counselling bodies, to the Education Department which has never reached the Italian parents, we will open up a community which needs and wishes to be informed about what goes on around them. . . this is aside from the enormously important aspect of providing entertainment in the homes of migrants there are many doctors and at least one consulting psychiatrist in our Foundation Committee who could tell you far better than I what enormous need there is for this alone. . .

It will conclude on the last criterion indicated by Mr Rushton: He said, and I quote: "In circumstances where a population group has been traditionally disadvantaged by the community of which it forms a part, the criterion of social compensation should apply — for instance the government may decide to employ a disproportionate amount of public money as a means of compensating past inequities. . ."

One is tempted to say, thank you very much, because there is no doubt that much inequity has resulted with regards to the Italian and other communities in a cultural and social sense. But we neither suggest these inequities were predetermined and wilfully applied, nor do we wish to exact from the already overburdened

Australian taxpayer this suggested form of compensation. It's not our style. Just as over the past twenty-five years we have amply demonstrated our willingness and our ability to work and pay for our success, so we are quite prepared now to provide the necessary funds to establish and run profitably and professionally, but with honest concern for all the needs of our and other communities, Radio Italo Australiana.

AM, FM, Commercial Licence, Experimental Licence . . . there seems to be a wide choice of possibilities. We are ready, and we are ready now to make this bid on behalf of our community and of other communities for their benefit which, let me remind you, is the ultimate benefit of Australia.

THE AUSTRALIAN Friday July 12 1974-3

THE Italian community is applying to have its own radio station.

The station would provide a link between Italian and Australian welfare agencies and cultural groups, broadcast courses in English and Italian and have access programs on schools and other aspects of Australian life.

The head of the organisation, Mr P. Bosi, a Sydney journalist and broadcaster, said yesterday that they had been encouraged by recent reports by the Department of the Media that licences would become available to group interests.

Mr Bosi said that having a station seemed the most obvious first step toward overcoming Italian migrants' cultural and social problems.

PROBLEMS

He said: "Many Italians suffer from a cultural starvation because they cannot properly understand the language of the way of life."

"It is wrong to imagine that social problems arise with the successful integration of a migrant community."

The new problem began when their children start to feel a sense of alienation from their families, whose culture and traditions they don't understand."

It was important that parents be taught the fundamentals of Australian life and history so they could adapt without abandoning their heritage, he said.

He added: "According to the main Italian welfare agency, the number of marriage breakdowns among Italians is increasing rapidly — as is the number of Italian children rebelling against parental authority."

The Sydney Morning Herald, Mon, November 4, 1974

Campaign for Italian radio station

A campaign to establish an Italian-language radio station in Sydney was formally launched at the weekend.

At a luncheon in the Wentworth Hotel on Saturday, Mr Pino Bosi, a writer and broadcaster, told an audience of more than 150: "The loss of a language is cultural genocide."

Mr Bosi is chairman of Radio Italo-Australiana, which describes itself as: "An independent association with the aim of establishing a radio station for the use and benefit of the Italian community in Australia and to assist in its integration with the Australian community."

Mr Bosi said yesterday the idea was for the Italian community to set up a co-operative to run the station.

CONSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF R.I.A. RADIO ITALO-AUSTRALIANA

- (1) The executive organs of R.I.A. shall consist of a Board of Directors, a Foundation Committee and a number of Committees.
- (2) The Board of Directors of R.I.A. for the time being shall consist of the present seven members namely: Mr Pino Bosi, author and broadcaster (Chairman), Leandro Gambotto, businessman, Bruno Nesco, lawyer, Rev. Father Alfonso Maria, migrant chaplain in the Capuchin Order, Rev. Father Nevo, migrant chaplain in the Scalabrini Order, Mr George Piccollo, Labor M.L.A. and Mr Frank Calabro, Liberal M.L.C. and the elected Chairmen of the seven principal Committees: Public Relations Committee, Finance Committee, Broadcasting Access Committee, Integration Advancement Committee, Priorities Committee, Clubs and Associations Co-ordination Committee and the Central Committee of Programming.
- (3) The Foundation Committee shall consist of individuals or individuals representing firms, associations, companies or other bodies which were invited or have come forward to participate in such role due to their standing in the Community.
- (4) A member of the Foundation Committee need not be a member of R.I.A.
- (5) At its first meeting or subsequent meeting the Foundation Committee shall elect the following Committees having the powers and functions indicated herein:
 - (a) a PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE for the purpose of promoting the initiative in the Community.
 - (b) a BROADCASTING ACCESS COMMITTEE for the purpose of promoting and co-ordinating participation by and access to other ethnic groups.
 - (c) an INTEGRATION ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE for the purpose of considering and deciding ways and means by which the Community can be assisted in integrating with the Community as a whole through the radio medium.
 - (d) a PRIORITIES COMMITTEE for the purpose of deciding on expenditure and programming priorities.
 - (e) a CLUBS AND ASSOCIATIONS CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE for the purpose of promoting and co-ordinating access by Associations and Clubs.
 - (f) a FUND RAISING COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning all fund raising for post-licence stage.
 - (g) a STATION INCOME COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning income projections at a post establishment stage.
 - (h) an ENTERTAINMENT COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning music, comedy, drama and related programs.
 - (i) a CURRENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning news, interviews and related programs.
 - (j) a SPORTING COMMITTEE (which shall have an intra sub-committee solely devoted to the planning of soccer matches broadcasts and related programs) for the purpose of planning and coordinating all sporting programs.
 - (k) a YOUTH COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning youth oriented programs.
 - (l) an EDUCATION COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning all educational programs.
 - (m) a WELFARE COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning and co-ordinating welfare motivated programs.
 - (n) a CULTURE COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning cultural programs.
 - (o) a RELIGIOUS COMMITTEE for the purpose of planning religious programs.
- (6) Four designated members from each of the Fund Raising Committee and the Station Income Committee shall constitute the FINANCE COMMITTEE which shall have the function of co-ordinating all financial aspects of the proposed Co-operative.
- (7) The Chairman of the Committees stipulated as (b) to (o) in paragraph (5) herein shall constitute the CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF PROGRAMMING which shall have the function of co-ordinating all aspects of programming.
- (8) The number of members of each of the Committees shall be decided upon by the Foundation Committee.
- (9) Each Committee shall elect its own Chairman.
- (10) All Committees shall be responsible to the Board of Directors.
- (11) Every R.I.A. organ shall elect its own Secretary who shall be responsible for the administration of the Committee's function and the proper keeping of minutes.
- (12) Each Committee shall meet as frequently as it thinks fit but it shall meet at least once every three months.
- (13) Each Committee shall adopt the constitution of R.I.A. in so far and mutatis mutandis as it is applicable but particularly to the procedure, elections and meetings.
- (14) At the first meeting of the Foundation Committee or at a subsequent meeting, the Chairman of the Board shall call for nominations for membership of the various Committees.
- (15) Any member or Officer of any Committee shall account as soon as practicable to the Treasurer of R.I.A. for all moneys received by that officer or member.