

An overview of the new Italian migration to Australia

Italians Down Under Conference
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INTRODUCTION

- My comments from research which originates from commissioned request from the Victorian COMITES - Francesco Pascalis and ultimately the Italian Foreign Affairs Ministry, Rome
- Our research (Dr Armillei) went about this research realising how poorly treated this matter was and some strong misunderstandings
- It was independent research with clear recommendations proposed
- Methodologically sound seeking out voices from those concerned - Focus groups, survey (600), Migration Agents
- Our research only scratches the surface
- Conclusions may not please all – that’s research!

NEW ITALIAN MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA

- Italy is no stranger to emigration and should we also ad immigration
- Australia has a rich tradition of Italian migration
- Italian communities have been built in Australian cities and he have said, written and documented much about the post 1950s immigration
- Mass Italian migration ended in the early 1970s and there was settlement – assimilation – integration – we call it multiculturalism
- Between 1970 and 2004 low numbers
- This changed with the 2004 Working Holiday arrangement
- A spike in “new Italian migration” coming to Australia again - Yet much of the Italian arrivals was under the radar screen.

ITALIAN MIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA OF YESTERDAY

- Australia needed migration – Italy was in need to promote emigration
- Migration towards skilled British – result large numbers of Italian migration
- 1951 Italian Assisted Migration agreement - provisions assisting Italians
- Numbers of Italian between 1947 & 1970 equalled 289,476 – average 16k pa.
- Mostly from the South with some regions of the North (Veneto, Friuli)
- Initially mostly men and later equalled up with women
- Uneducated, regional in nature, poor skills on the whole & little language
- Located in the big cities of Australia – Melbourne and Sydney
- Migration mostly as a permanent move – Jupp (1 in 40 returned)
- Early years very difficult – intolerance, discrimination, ghetto constructs
- Slowly settlement arrangements emerged took a decade for basic needs
- 1975-76 - Italians returning was higher than the number arriving from Italy

THE MAKING OF AN ITALIAN COMMUNITY

- Slowly settlement arrangements emerged but it took more than a decade before basic needs were provided
- Italians were the largest non-English speaking community for decades
- The establishment of CoAsIt, the emergence of Italian clubs, the creation of Italian newspapers (Il Globo 1959)
- The emergence of multiculturalism and 1972 labor government made significant changes
- Migrants became part of the social, political and economic landscape
- Second generation Italians emerged in all walks of life
- Italian as a language held out as one of the largest non English languages until recently
- Italians integrated into Australian society – new migration took over

What does the data on Italian migration to Australia of the last decade or so tell us?

Main Visa Categories 2004-2015 visa granted to Italian citizens

Category	2004-05	2009-10	2014-15	% Change from 2013-14	2014-15 as a % of Australian Total	Total Italy 2004-15	% of Australian total 2004-15
<i>Temporary Entry (TE)</i>							
Visitor Visas	50,038	53,450	54,954	0.1%	1.3%	587,496	1.5%
417 Working Holiday Visa	1,894	5,481	14,138	-11.9%	6.2%	83,462	4.2%
457 Business Long Stay	360	657	2,110	31.2%	2.2%	11,681	1.1%
Student Visas	700	1,758	5,602	24.3%	1.9%	24,797	0.9%
<i>Migration Program (MP)</i>							
Partner	254	330	521	11.6%	1.1%	3,691	0.8%
Employer Sponsored	79	214	636	37.1%	1.3%	3,221	0.8%
Skilled Independent	53	86	97	6.6%	0.2%	795	0.2%

Source: The Authors (2016)

The Italian share of the Australian Temporary visa program between 2004 and 2015 was a very small 1.5% of the total (this figure is calculated by looking at the four major temporary visa subclasses as shown in Table 1.1).

In terms of the Italian contribution to the national Migration Program, the figure is slightly lower at 0.5%, with 8,711 visas granted for permanent settlement of the total of 1,832,548.

Table 1.2: Italian citizens holding a temporary visa in Australia 2004-2015

Visa Holder Component	Total 2004-15	% of Total 2004-15
Working holiday maker visa holders	51,373	40.7%
Visitor visa holders	30,584	24.3%
Temporary skilled visa holders	17,682	14.0%
Student visa holders	17,024	13.5%
Bridging visa holders	5,321	4.2%
Other temporary visa holders	3,984	3.1%
Temporary graduate visa holders	265	0.2%
Total	126,233	100%

Source: The Authors (2016)

The term ‘Visa holders’ takes into consideration the net figure between those that had been granted a visa and arriving in Australia and those departing (personal communication, 8 June, 2016). There is thus a discrepancy between the number of visas granted and the number of Italians effectively holding a certain type of visa at the time the statistical analysis was conducted.

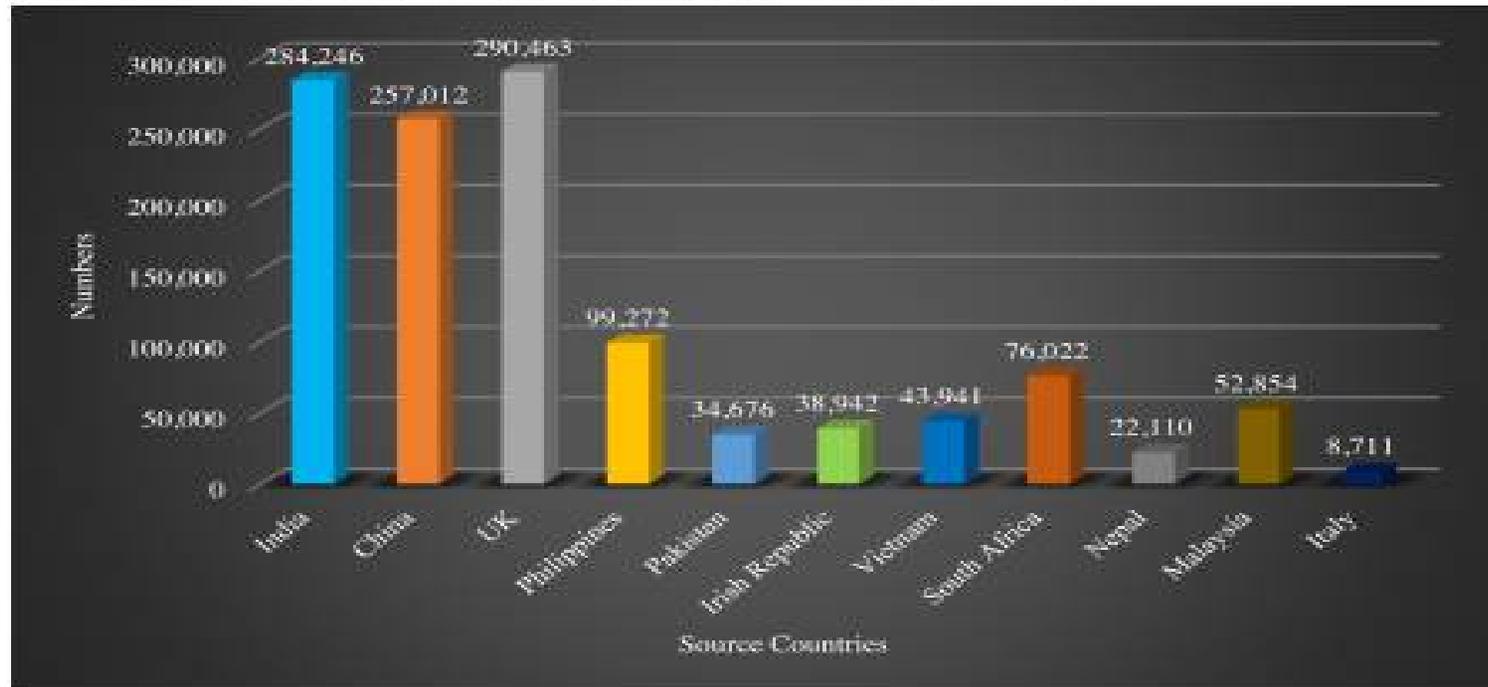
Table 1.3: Italian component of the migration program by visa category 2004-15

Stream	Category	Total 2004-15	% of Total 2004-15
<i>Family</i>	Partner	3,691	42.4%
	Child	35	0.4%
	Other Family	66	0.8%
	Parent	209	2.4%
Family Total		4,001	46.0%
<i>Skill</i>	Distinguished Talent	48	0.5%
	Employer Sponsored	3,221	37.0%
	Skilled Independent	795	9.1%
	Skilled Regional	112	1.3%
	State/Territory Nominated Visa Classes	297	3.4%
	Business Innovation and Investment	178	2.0%
Skill Total		4,651	53.3%
Special Eligibility		58	0.7%
Grand total		8,711	100%

Source: The Authors (2016)

The largest group of Italian nationals (3,691 or 42.4%) applied for permanent residence through the Partner category. This is closely followed by Employer Sponsored applicants (3,221 or 37%) under the Skill Stream. A smaller group of Italian entrants (795 or 9.1%) comes via the Skilled Independent category.

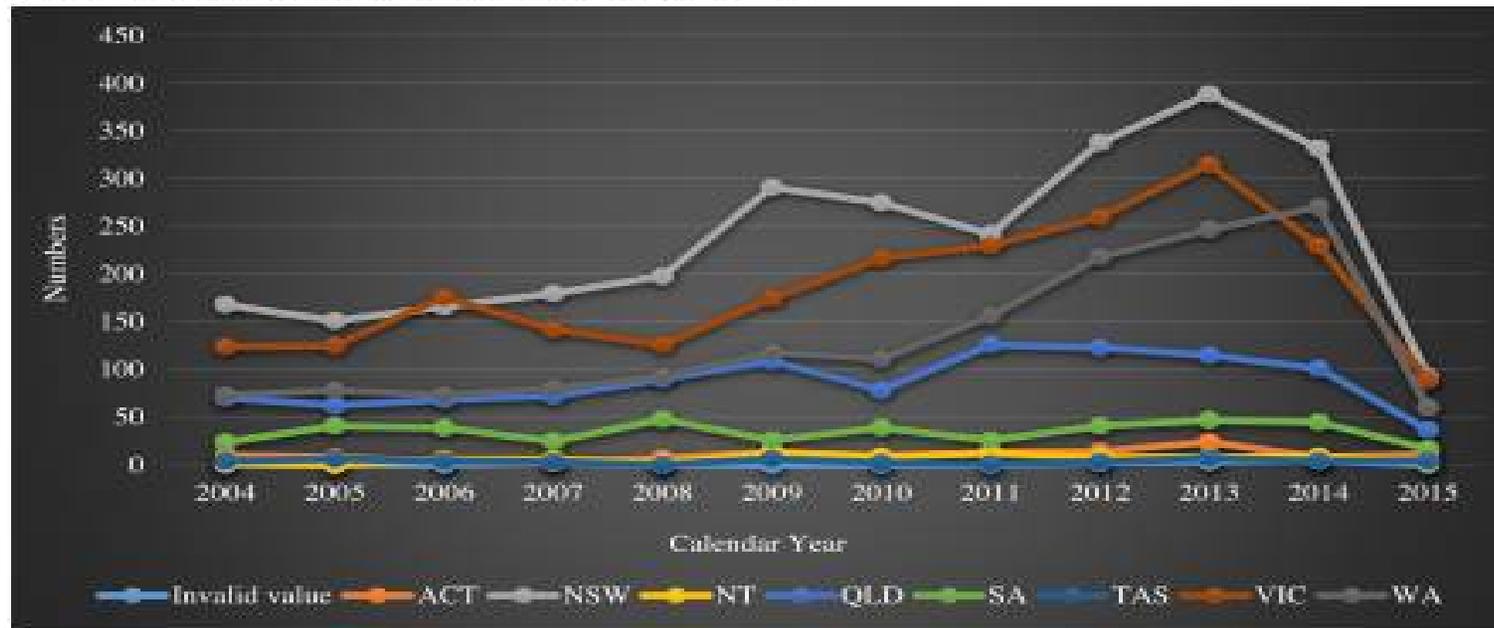
Figure 4.23: Migration Program: Top ten source countries total 2004-15



Source: The Authors (2016)

Germany and France, who are also not in the top ten source countries of migrants, have respectively about double (2.4) and one and a half (1.5) the number of applications than Italy under this program (DIBP, 2015a).

4.28: Italian settlers by State/Territory Trend 2004-15



Source: Department of Social Services (personal communication, 9 February, 2016)

The largest groups of Italian nationals have settled in New South Wales (33.9%) and Victoria (26.6%).

Italian citizens' arrivals and departures 2004-2015

- Net Overseas Migration (NOM): of at least 12 months stay in Australia - This means that only short-term movements such as tourists do not count as either NOM arrivals or departures.
- Between the financial years 2007-08 and 2012-13, the Italian NOM increased from 745 in 2007-08 to 5,421 in 2012-13 (an increase of 627.6%). It declined in 2014-15 to 1,460 (decrease of 73.1%).
- Italy more positive NOM, 20,188 compared to 19,091 of France and 5,614 of Germany. Net Migration top 20 source countries, Italy is in 12th position.
- When taking into account the length of time Italian migrants stay in Australia, it is possible to see that this has mainly a short-term character. Short-term residents and visitor arrivals/returns and departures constitute 98% and 95% respectively in the period under investigation 2004-15.
- It is at the 'net long-term visitors' that we have to look as the category providing the major contribution to the Italian NOM.

The data collection - Overview

- Three separate forms of data collection.
- Survey – Focus group of migrants and focus group of migration agents.
- Focus groups to validate survey responses.
- Jan-May 2016, 600 online surveys collected from Italians arriving in Australia after 2004.
- The breakdown of the sample was based on an equal ratio of male and female respondents (51% and 49%). 87% of the respondents in the age group between 18 to 40, with 13% in the 41 to 60 age category.
- Majority of new arrivals (45%) came from northern Italian regions (mainly Lombardia, Veneto and Friuli-Venezia Giulia). The second largest group (26%) was from central Italy (Lazio and Toscana), 22% from the South, especially Sicily, Campania and Puglia.
- 53% never lived outside Italy or a short-term experience living overseas.

The online survey profile

- 42% living in Australia more than a year but less than 4 years. 37%, living in Australia for over 4 years. 9% in Australia for less than a year.
- 50% respondents gained residence through the working holiday system - holders of student visa 15%, temporary work visa (subclass 457) 11%.
- Two largest groups were dual citizenship (Italian and Australian) and the 457 visa 21% each category. 18% & 17% PR & Student Visa categories.
- Over 60% were educated, either a Bachelor Degree 21%, a Master Degree 32%, or even a PhD 9%. 33% hold a High School Diploma.
- 60% indicated they had a good level of English. But also a group of respondents with no (8%) or limited English ability (32%).
- 47% indicated main reason for coming to Australia was ‘to find better job opportunities’ - only 9% said ‘out of work and looking for work’.
- ‘To make a new life experience’ category with 52% responses, ‘to study/do research’ at 15% and ‘I received a job offer’ at 11%.
- 63% “Italy’s economic situation affected the decision to come to Australia”.

Survey responses

- When asked about the type of job/career/business they wanted to have in the future, 53% stated that they are already doing what they like.
- 76% of all respondents sustained that their standard of living had improved since they moved to Australia.
- There was also an evident level of dissatisfaction among those that had to deal with the Australian bureaucratic system in order to get their previous professional and educational qualifications recognized.
- In the open-ended question of the survey, some complained about the fact that visa requirements are too hard to meet.
- Concern re the complexity of the system, migration agents unsure themselves.
- 48% of cases the principal employer of the WH visa holders was either Italian (26%) or Italian descent (22%). “Australian” employers 34%.
- For 55% of the participants the WH program ‘is/was a way to better understand the job market in Australia and eventually to stay’.

Findings of our study

- Italian migration in the early 1950s occurred within the legal framework (the 1951 agreement). Current migration – temporary or permanent - there is none.
- An influx of migrants, smaller than in 1950s, has an unchartered nature.
- People left to their own devices. No safety net – no help with employment – housing and other social and immediate needs.
- Net numbers of Italian arrivals since early 2000 are higher but only in relative terms. But still a matter of concern.
- Visa system – for Italians – is complex, unclear at times in contradiction.
- Immigration Department (DIPB) has adapted a bunker mentality.
- Information circulating to prospective new migrants is unreliable and mostly from informal sources (NOMIT and social media).
- Labour exploitation from visa entrapment verified. Some on the farms – but more was verified in industries such as catering, hospitality etc.
- Sponsorship income levels driving sponsors to illegal/unorthodox approach.

Recommendations

1. Need greater levels of assistance to new Italian migrants to Australia;
2. Need reliable/accurate information about Australia;
3. Establish a 'one-stop shop' for temporary Italian migrants on affordable housing, employment, job placements, legal issues, labour and work rights;
4. Provide English language training on arrival;
5. Re-assess the financial provision for visa sponsorship;
6. Access to Fair work Australia mechanisms –establish a migrant ombudsmen;
7. Overcome lack of recognition of qualifications/work experiences from Italy;
8. Italy provide some form of institutional representation charged with the responsibility to be a first point of call for new Italian prospective migrants;
9. Immigration Department re-establish contact with applicants – cost of applications;
10. Australian immigration processing - being receptive to immigration.