Pattern of Migration from Italy

Between 1876 and 1976 25.9 million Italians migrated from Italy. Of these, 19.5 million were men and 6.4 million were women. Italian men migrated in larger numbers than the females because young, healthy and able men were needed in countries requiring unskilled labour in primary and secondary industries. On the other hand, the women generally migrated through sponsorship by their husbands, fiance's, fathers and uncles.

Where did they come from? Why did they migrate? Where did they go?

In the period **1876-1900** there were an estimated 5.3 million Italian departures. Of these 60% were from Northern regions of Italy, 26.5% from Southern and 13.5% from Central regions. Half of the migrants headed to America, particularly South America, where there was a great need for workers (for example: on the coffee plantations of Sao Paolo, Brazil). A large percentage (48.5%) also migrated within Europe, the majority to nearby France.

In the following years, **1901 to 1915,** there was a significant increase in the number of Italians who migrated: 8.8 million. In fact, these pre-war years marked the peak period of Italian departures. In 1913 alone an estimated 872,000 Italians migrated. This equated to more than one in forty of the entire population. The majority settled in Europe (41%) or North America (40%), given that migration to the once popular Southern American nations of Brazil and Argentina, was no longer viable.

Italians were encouraged to migrate by many Italian governments because they believed migration could relieve amounting pressures caused by overcrowding and unemployment, particularly in the major Italian cities. Furthermore, the remittances migrant sent back to their families in the homeland not only provided much needed financial support to their struggling families, but the incoming money also greatly assisted the Italian economy.

The interwar years, **1916 to 1942**, saw a significant decrease in the number of Italians leaving Italy: 4.4 million migrated abroad. This decrease was attributed in part to the coming to power of the Fascist leader Mussolini (1922), who openly discouraged temporary and particularly permanent migration. He believed that Italians should stay in Italy to help create a powerful and strong nation, instead of working abroad in foreign lands. Another important contributing factor to this marked decline in Italian migration was the fact that many countries who had in the past accepted large numbers of Italian migrants, i.e. America, now heavily restricted the intake of Italian migrants. Of those who departed in this period, 47% were from Northern Italy, with 33% from Southern and 20% from Central regions. The most popular migrant destinations continued to be Europe and America.

Following the end of the Second World War and the fall of Fascism, and also encouraged by the new Christian Democrat Prime Minister, De Gasperi, Italians again looked to head abroad, and did so in large numbers. Between **1946 and 1976** an estimated 7.4 million Italians left Italy, well over half (52.5%) from the South, heading predominantly to European destinations. It was in this period that a visible number also headed to Australia.

Italians and migration to Australia and South Australia

Pre-world war

Italians have been arriving in Australia and South Australia, in limited numbers, since the last decades of the 18th century and throughout the 19th century. In the 1840s Italian clergy arrived as part of missions to Stradbroke Island (near Brisbane) and some who were part of the Salvado mission (Western Australia). Significant numbers of Italians and Swiss Italians arrived in the 1850s attracted by the discovery of gold in Victoria. In 1881 an estimated 200 Northern Italians, survivors from Marquis de Ray's ill-fated attempt at founding a colony, settled in Northern New South Wales. Purchasing 40 acres of farm land, they formed what was subsequently known as 'New Italy'. In the following decade, other Italians, again the majority from Northern regions (in particular Lombardia and Piemonte), arrived on the Queensland cane plantations to replace South Sea Islander indentured labourers, and in Western Australia (Kalgoorlie) arrived following the discovery of gold (1893). According to the

1891 census there were an estimated 3,890 Italy-born in Australia. Of these, 185 had settled in South Australia. As at the last pre-second world war census (1933), there were an estimated 26,756 Italy-born in Australia and the number of Italy-born in South Australia was 1,489 (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Italy-born in Australia and South Australia (1871 – 1933)*

	Australia	South Australia
1871	960	n.a
1881	1,880	141
1891	3,890	185
1901	5,678	327
1911	6,719	184
1921	8,135	344
1933	26,756	1,489

Italians in Australia settled predominantly in areas on the fringes of metropolitan areas. Many were employed in market gardening, poultry and pig faming, horticulture and viticulture. In South Australia areas with large pre-war concentrations of Italians included Lockelys, Hectorville, Paradise and the Adelaide Hills areas of Basket Range and Uraidla.

Post World War Two

In the years immediately following the end of the Second World War, Australia with a small and thinly spread population, was vulnerable to the threat of an invasion from the north. As a result, Arthur Calwell, Australia's first immigration minister (1945) embarked on a 'Populate or Perish' program. The aim of this program was to increase the population of the country by one percent per annum for strategically important economic and military reasons. In keeping with the Government's White Australia Policy (1901), Calwell initially attempted to bring British migrants to Australia, but with little success, given that the British were busy rebuilding after the war. He then looked to Northern Europe, whose generally fair-haired and fair-skinned people he believed would be able to assimilate more easily in Australia. Italians and other

Southern Europeans were not sought after by the Australian Government, who believed that these darker-skinned individuals would be less likely to integrate into Australia, even though, following a difficult and destructive war campaign and the resulting poverty, Southern Europeans were eager to be given the opportunity to migrate to Australia. However, due to a very desperate need for migrants, Australia did eventually open its door to Europeans, including Italians.

In post-war Italy, work was hard to find, pay was low and it was difficult to make ends meet. Post-war Italians came to Australia in search of work, which would give them economic security and a better future for their families. Their intentions were to work hard, save their money and eventually *migliorare la vita* (make a better life for themselves). In the years following the end of the Second World War the number of Italian arrivals in Australia increased significantly. Between 1945 and 1951 more than 35,000 Italians migrated to Australia and between 1951 and 1972 an estimated 338,624 Italians migrated to Australia. The 1950s was the peak decade of Italian migration to Australia with as many as 193,791 Italians settling in Australia.

To provide Italians with assistance with the costs of migration to Australia, a bilateral agreement was signed between Italy and Australia in 1951. The Agreement resulted in the Australian Government subsidising 25% of the cost of the voyage, the Italian Government paying 25%, with the remaining 50% be provided as a loan to the migrant. However, despite the existence of this particular agreement, only 20% of the Italians to reach Australia in the post-war period came under this scheme and of the Italian who did take up this opportunity, the vast majority were Northern Italians. Southern Italians generally arrived through chain migration; this process occurs when one member of the family settles in Australia and then sponsors out his family and friends.

As a result of the chain migration process large numbers of Italians from certain *paese* (towns) and *regioni* (regions) become concentrated in particular Australian suburbs and thus creating the formation of discrete settlements or neighbourhood groupings of Italians. For example, in South Australia there is a large concentration of *campani* in Payneham and Campbelltown and a large concentration of c*alabresi* in Seaton. The Italian community has always lived together

in specific areas, which serves to create and perpetuate an atmosphere of community closeness and support. Clearly, as in pre-war times 'self help and mutual-help within the Italian community have been the immigrants' chief means of support in times of need' (Loh 1980: 45). Understanding the way in which a particular cultural and linguistically diverse group is distributed across an area is very important to the planning and delivery of services.

Unlike pre-war Italians migrants, most of those who arrived in Australia in the post-war period came from the agricultural areas of the south or from the poorer Northern towns and planned to settle in Australia permanently. An estimated 80% were from Southern Italian regions, with 30% from Calabria (Paganoni &O'Connor 1999: 171). Nearly 70% of post-war Italian migrants were farmers, labourers, process workers or craftsmen. Not surprisingly, the jobs they found upon arrival reflected their backgrounds: over 80% worked as a labourer or in skilled or semi-skilled sectors of industry. Italian women in Australia generally worked in low-skilled and low paid jobs, particularly in process factories. Many worked in order to pay off a house and to achieve the economic security for which they came. According to Loh (1980: 45): 'Everywhere they have settled, Italians have proved willing to work hard and long to establish their families. Until such time as they have considered themselves secure economically, work has been the dominant factor in their lives.'

The peak year for the number of Italy-born in Australia and South Australia was 1971. According to the census of that year, there were an estimated 289,476 Italy-born in Australia of which 32,428 (11.2%) resided in South Australia. The early 1970s marked the beginning of a steady decrease in the number of Italians arriving in Australia and in fact, since the mid 1970s, the number of Italians leaving Italy and migrating, (including coming to Australia) has been insignificant. Italy has concentrated on economic reform and, in the past few decades the country has created and maintained a strong and sustainable economy. Today, Italy is a member of the exclusive G8 (the top eight economies in the world). With a booming economy and offering so many more opportunities for Italians to find work in their homeland than were available in the 1950s and 1960s, the once massive migration out-flow from Italy, has, in the latter half of the century and new millennium, been more or less reduced to a trickle.

In Australia and South Australia, as the post-war migrants reach old age, it is reasonable to conclude that the number of Italy-born people will be reduced in future Australian censuses. However, it is important to note, that, at the time of the 2006 census, with the exception of people born in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and China, people born in Italy still constituted the largest group of overseas born migrants.

Table 2: *Italy-born in Australia and South Australia (1947- 2006)*

	Australia	South Australia
1947	33,632	2,428
1954	119,897	11,833
1961	228,296	26,230
1971	289,476	32,428
1981	275,883	31,323
1986	261,879	29,607
1991	254,924	28,951
1996	238,246	27,185
2001	218,718	25,047
2006	199,124	22,463

Italian Migration Information References and Acknowledgements

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