

## Genni's speech

From an early age I recognized that I was in effect, an Italian living abroad. Whilst growing up, my life was filled with Italian cuisine and stories of life in Italy, pre, my parents migration. As we lived and worked in hotels, this meant we unfortunately spoke little Italian. As a child it didnt always make sense, I was experiencing cultural diversity; my life at home contrasted with my life beyond the front door.

I learnt about Italy at school: Ancient Rome, its empires, geography and social culture. I learnt about the Italian contribution to the arts, both fine and musical. As a matter of fact, I learnt so much about Italy I looked forward to the day I finally arrived here. And that I did!! At the age of fifteen, I made my first pilgrimage to Italy and was I in awe! Previously, I had lived in a country as large as Europe, though at that age I had barely travelled more than a few hundred kilometres. I always knew Italy was on the other side of the globe, making the journey put the distance into perspective. Some time later, I realized that my mother never realized the distance that she was migrating away from her family, until she made the physical journey. Something many migrants never comprehend, till they consider the distance of a return trip.

Fortunately my parents were able to return to Italy, and especially Onore their birthplace, on a regular basis. To my good fortune, and my siblings, I was able to call Onore, my home away from home.

I came from a country barely two hundred years old, to the home of a significant and historical focal point of civilisation. To me now, the cultural apex; but I am biased. At the first opportunity, I and my siblings as my husband Robert had already done, took out Italian citizenship and I am proud that now, our children also have dual citizenship.

I have always had, one foot in Australia and the other here, in my parents Patria.

To this end my siblings and I hold dear the sacrifice our parents made to leave this valley they so loved. I in turn, return here and bring my children here to enjoy the family traditions of Italia. As a proud Italian living abroad, I feel I have deep and strong roots here in Onore. My strong, deep roots make me an oak. . . . . Grazie.

*Onore, Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2012*