

New synergies for the Australian Business Community

By ADRIAN GUIDO
President, National Council of ICCI in Australia

I am particularly pleased, indeed proud, at the opportunity of addressing the members of all five Italian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Australia — and the general Business Community — from the pages of this prestigious publication that reflects so well Italian style, gives an authoritative voice to the Italian Australian component of our multicultural society and pays due recognition to the contribution made by our forebears to the growth of this country.

I am happy to report that the National Council of Italian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in Australia is now a reality. Representatives of the five Chambers met in Adelaide on 21 June this year, to put the finishing touches and sign the formal agreement. The agreement was officially counter-signed by the new Italian Ambassador to Australia, H.E. Dino Volpicelli, in Canberra on 20 September, in the presence of other Italian diplomatic and trade officials, the Australian Minister for Foreign Trade, the Hon. Mark Veil, senior Austrade management and, of course, representatives of the five member Chambers.

I am given the opportunity of addressing you through this magazine as part of an important agreement of collaboration reached with the management of *"Italy Down Under"*.

The main points of this collaboration are two: the Chambers will have a regular section in the magazine and all members of all Chambers will automatically



Adrian Guido

become subscribers of the publication. In this way our organisation reaches a national mainstream audience, as well as our own members nationally. At the same time the magazine gains as subscribers thousands of decision and opinion makers across the country.

This agreement with *"Italy Down Under"* is indeed the first formal act of the National Council of ICCI, as it was approved at the same meeting of 21 of June. It was also instrumental in bringing together the five state Presidents, which in turn created an environment of thinking "nationally" and it has given us a national voice and dimension.

This is a proud moment for me, as your National President, and a watershed in the efforts of our Chambers in promoting bilateral trade between Italy and Australia. It is particularly pleasing that

the Chambers "federated" this year, when we celebrate the centenary of the Australian Federation, thus being in tune with the symbolism of banding together for the greater benefit of all.

I take this opportunity to thank all those who have contributed, over time, to this momentous achievement. Particularly former Ambassador Giovanni Castellaneta, his successor Dr Volpicelli and the Italian Consuls in every State, who have offered their personal support and encouragement as well as the official backing of the Italian Government.

A vote of gratitude to my Vice President, Mr Don Totino, who has been a fervent advocate of a national body for many years, and to Comm. Paolo Mirabella, my immediate predecessor, who laid the foundations of the agreement. And of course to the current Presidents, Boards and Secretary Generals of the five Chambers who have worked very hard at refining the agreement and committed themselves to make it work.

Last, but not least, I wish to thank the management of *"Italy Down Under"* who has supported the Chambers, campaigned for the national body through this publication and have patiently and constructively negotiated the agreement of collaboration over a period of nearly two years.

This new synergy has made ICCI a stronger, better-equipped business organisation to assist our members and to offer an attractive service package to our potential members, the broad Australian Business Community. We are ready, able and willing to serve you. ●

ADRIAN GUIDO A STEP AT A TIME

Listening to President of the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), Adrian Guido, you couldn't but agree that Australia is doing plenty to foster bilateral trade agreements with Italy.

Guido describes the ICCI as an effective tool for cementing such relations between the countries. It is one of the oldest chambers in the world – being founded in 1922 – and the Sydney chamber ranks fourth, out of 68, in the world in terms of the volume of accredited projects it is able to generate annually.

"Accredited projects," Guido, a lawyer, says, "are those projects that the Italian Foreign Ministry sees as having in some way facilitated, assisted or augmented the growth of small to medium Italian industries. The Italian Government is recognising more and more the importance of its network of chambers of commerce around the world because the small and medium sized industries are the lifeblood of the Italian economy."

Guido says that the work of the chamber has been simplified by the creation of an Australian National Council of chambers. This has been important as it allows the Australian chapters of the ICCI to speak with a unified voice to Italian entrepreneurs. It also allows the smaller chambers around the country to tackle larger projects, which would otherwise be financially prohibitive.

Already there are approximately 2,000 small and medium sized Italian businesses operating in Australia. Then there are those which see this country as a good platform from which to launch their products.

"Because of Sydney's geographical position, Italian industry sees it as a launching pad into South East Asia," Guido says. "Also the low interest rates in NSW, the stable infrastructure, political and economic stability and AAA credit rating are all very important things Italian businessmen are looking for."

However, he agrees that it is not just business that links the countries – it is our shared histories and cultural interest, particularly expressed by Australians, that is an important factor in building a strong economic future together.

"My own parents came to this country in 1937 and we always had a close link with things Italian. This experience instilled in me a desire to know more about Italy culturally," Guido says, adding that it's a desire that affects many Australians.

"We've noticed at the ICCI that the Australian businessman loves Italy, wants to know more about it, culturally and at a touristy level. That's fine, once you have that rapport established then comes the commerce. So what I say to Italy is 'Let's not be in a hurry' – first comes culture, affinity and rapport, and

then you can do the business." According to Guido, this interest will also be beneficial to Italian businesses seeking to extend to Australian shores.

"The Australian market has a love for all things Italian. What Italy will sell more and more of is 'lifestyle'. It's something that people want to be a part of. The desire is certainly there and there is a huge demand for it."

However he notes that there is some flow back to Italy from Australia too, with the Italian market becoming more educated in what we offer culturally, this being the first step in the process to better business links.

"We have sought to bring Australian culture to the Italians," a comment that sounds somewhat amusing when one considers that around 50 percent of the world's art heritage is contained in Italy.

"Some might say it is funny for Australia to be exporting a culture to a country that pre-dates the Roman Empire. Well, we can bring to Italy a culture that is 40,000 years old and we have already exported indigenous art, artefacts and fabric to Italy, all of which proved very successful."