

The Australian Women's Register

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Italy Born Community of Australia

Summary

In the nineteenth century Italians priests performed missionary work in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory and the Italian linguist Raffaello Carboni played a significant role in the Eureka Stockade revolt of 1854. Small Italian communities catered to miners on the goldfields of Victoria and Western Australia. In 1885 a group of some 300 migrants from northern Italy established a traditional Italian community called 'New Italy' in northern New South Wales (NSW). Italian fishermen also established communities along the south coast of NSW, Port Pirie and Fremantle. During this period Italian labourers arrived in Queensland to work on the cane fields. By the late 1930s, one third of all Australia's Italian migrants lived in the cane-growing regions of Queensland. Italians also became involved in market gardens, comprising about 40 per cent of Queensland's market gardeners.

In 1947 the population of the Italy-born was 33,632 persons and by 1971 the number had increased to 289,476 persons. Most of the Italian migrants came from Sicily, Calabria and Veneto and settled in metropolitan areas. Italy experienced economic buoyancy after 1971, and this prompted many Italians to leave Australia and return to Italy. This led to a decline in the size of the Italian population in Australia. The 1996 Census recorded a drop in the number of Italy-born persons to 238,216.

Details

The latest Census in 2001 recorded 218,750 Italy-born persons in Australia, a decrease of 8 per cent from the 1996 Census. The 2001 distribution by State and Territory showed Victoria had the largest number with 90,810 followed by New South Wales (60,640), South Australia (25,040) and Western Australia (23,090).

The median age of the Italy-born in 2001 was 62.0 years compared with 46.0 years for all overseas-born and 35.6 years for the total Australian population. The age distribution showed 0.4 per cent were aged 0-14 years, 0.7 per cent were 15-24 years, 11.9 per cent were 25-44 years, 45.0 per cent were 45-64 years and 42.0 per cent were 65 and over. Of the Italy-born in Australia, there were 114,860 males (52.5 per cent) and 103,900 females (47.5 per cent). The sex ratio was 110.5 males per 100 females.

At the 2001 Census, the rate* of Australian Citizenship for the Italy-born in Australia was 79.9 per cent. The rate for all overseas-born was 75.1 per cent.

Published resources

Edited Book

The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins, Jupp, James, 2001

Journal Article

Lena Santospirito - the Person, Santospirito, Tony, 2001

Book

A profile of the Italian Community in Australia, Ware, Helen, 1981

Archival resources

Italian Historical Society

[Santospirito Collection](#)

National Library of Australia, Manuscript Collection

[Papers of Franca Arena, 1959-2005 \[manuscript\]](#)

Mitchell and Dixson Libraries Manuscripts Collection

[Franca Arena - papers, ca.1960-2000](#)

State Library of South Australia

[Italo-Australian Women in South Australia : SUMMARY RECORD \[sound recording\] Interviewers: Marina Berton & Caterina Andreacchio](#)

State Library of Victoria

[Music of migrant groups in Australia, \[197-?\]. \[sound recording\].](#)

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