



# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War Two Italian migration to Australia



# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

## LOGLINE

A poetic ethnographic documentary that draws on the individual and collective memories of Italian migrants who made Victoria, Australia their home after the end of World War 2.

## SYNOPSIS

From the ruins of post world war two Italy, hundreds of thousands of people migrated to Australia, part of the largest documented migration in history. This documentary film shines a light on some of the cultural and social stories these migrants came with and were met by and how these stories transformed over time, offering a profound reminiscence and ensuring a generation of stories is not lost. These are the stories of Australia, of the challenges and achievements of migration - **the memories that make us all.**

photos courtesy Museums Victoria Collections and D'Aprano Family



# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia



*Memories, we will always have them in our hearts from our old country. It was where we were born. It was where we first started life. But the memories - the real memories - are made here in Australia. Because it's like you have left your old life behind to start a new one. And this is when the memories are made. The moment we arrived here, a new life, new memories.*

- JOSIE, WONTHAGGI ITALIAN SENIOR CITIZENS GROUP



# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia



*On a Sunday, there was the tradition of 'la visita' ... that is what allowed most of the families here to survive. You would go to one place and 'visita' then to another place and 'visita' and then I would come to your place and so on. And that was so very, very important in our survival.*

*- SAM, Wonthaggi Italian Senior Citizens Club*

# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia


## BACKGROUND

The film emerges from a long-term research project conducted at Deakin University led by Toija Cinque, Martin Potter and Sean Redmond, with the support of CO.AS.IT. Italian Assistance Association, in collaboration with senior researcher and Il Globo journalist Riccardo Schirru and multi-cultural communications expert and project manager Fotis Kapetopolous.

"Memories That Make Us" is a story that reaches back across generations, spanning countries and oceans, reflecting massive global shifts catalysed through war, politics and changes in social attitudes. The Italian migration story moves from the rise of fascism, through the Second World War, the devastation of Italian cities and countryside and the waves of post-war migration that rippled out across Europe, America and Australia. Of the 33,000 Italians who migrated to Australia between 1947 and 1950, preceding another 170,000+ in the 1950s and early 1960's, many came from southern Italy. Between 1951 and 1968, around 42,000 Italians arrived under the assisted passage agreement between Australia and Italy. Around 80% were sponsored by relatives or *paesani* (people from the same region), some of who had arrived in Australia before the Second World War. Those selected for assisted passage came on the condition that they took whatever work and accommodation was offered for a period of two years. Many were recruited in Italy for projects like the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Scheme. Others were sent to the steelworks in towns such as Newcastle and Wollongong or employed in the engineering and textile factories that were springing up in major cities. Following the end of their contracts the majority of migrants from this time settled in the inner suburbs of Melbourne and Sydney and radically transformed the social, cultural, political and economic lives of these cities.

These post World War 2 Italian migrants are now aged over their seventies. Their stories need to be heard and shared with the Australian community and inter-generationally within the Italian Australian community. This project seeks to play a part in ensuring that stories from this ageing generation of Italians are not forgotten. Every generation must relearn the old stories of past generations if they are to remain in the collective memory for current and future generations.

The aim of the documentary is, in part, to create networks and affective ties not only between generations of Italian Australians but to diasporic populations around the world. Informed by extensive interviews, story circles, memory walks and friendship cells, and with the unique participation and support from the Italian community in Victoria, the resulting documentary is a multi-voiced story that activates and connects memories of the past with present experiences.

An elderly couple is dancing in a room. The woman is wearing a red dress with a black paisley pattern and has her back to the camera. The man is wearing a dark blue shirt and is looking towards the camera. They are holding hands and appear to be in a waltz. In the background, there are other people, including a woman in a black and white patterned dress and a man in a dark suit, all slightly out of focus. The background wall is made of light-colored bricks.

*I remember my first dance with my husband,  
it was a waltz, and he asked me. He was a  
good dancer and you know Italians dance  
close - none of this over there business.  
- ANNA, Wonthaggi Italian Senior Citizens Group*

**MEMORIES THAT MAKE US**  
stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

## DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT


We produced this film over an 18 month period, greatly impacted by COVID which saw our home of Melbourne, Victoria endure the longest lockdown in the world at 262 days. During this time, the task of preserving some of the stories of this generation of migrants who have such a positive and profound impact on Australian society seemed to gain gravitas. Human connections and the sharing of memories go hand in hand. Despite the social distance that defined the lockdowns sharing our memories with others makes those memories real.

*"Memories That Make Us"* seeks to shine a light on some of the cultural and social stories post-war Italian migrants came with and how these stories transformed over time, offering both a profound reminiscence and ensuring a generation of stories are not lost.

This is also a documentary that probes how we construct our cultural identity and how our identities evolve over time. It is a film about traces and layers, about the human as a palimpsest - like a palimpsest, we are written on by the memories we share, and by those shared with and about us. We are made of memories - individually and collectively. Every community has a living memory of itself, an awareness of a collective identity woven of a thousand individual stories. Memory is a means for endlessly re-writing the self and our collective identity. To realise this sense of 'palimpsest' on film we interweave personal archival footage with memory provocations such as the 'memory walk' and 'reminiscencia' (everyday keepsakes, objects and mementoes that stir reminiscence and memories of migration). Our memory keepers talk, and walk, us through their memories and the moments, objects and spaces that contain those memories.

The complex interweaving of these memories allows both the memory keepers and the audience to step back for a 'synoptic view' of our selves both individually and collectively and to see the traces and layers - the palimpsest of memories - that makes 'us'.



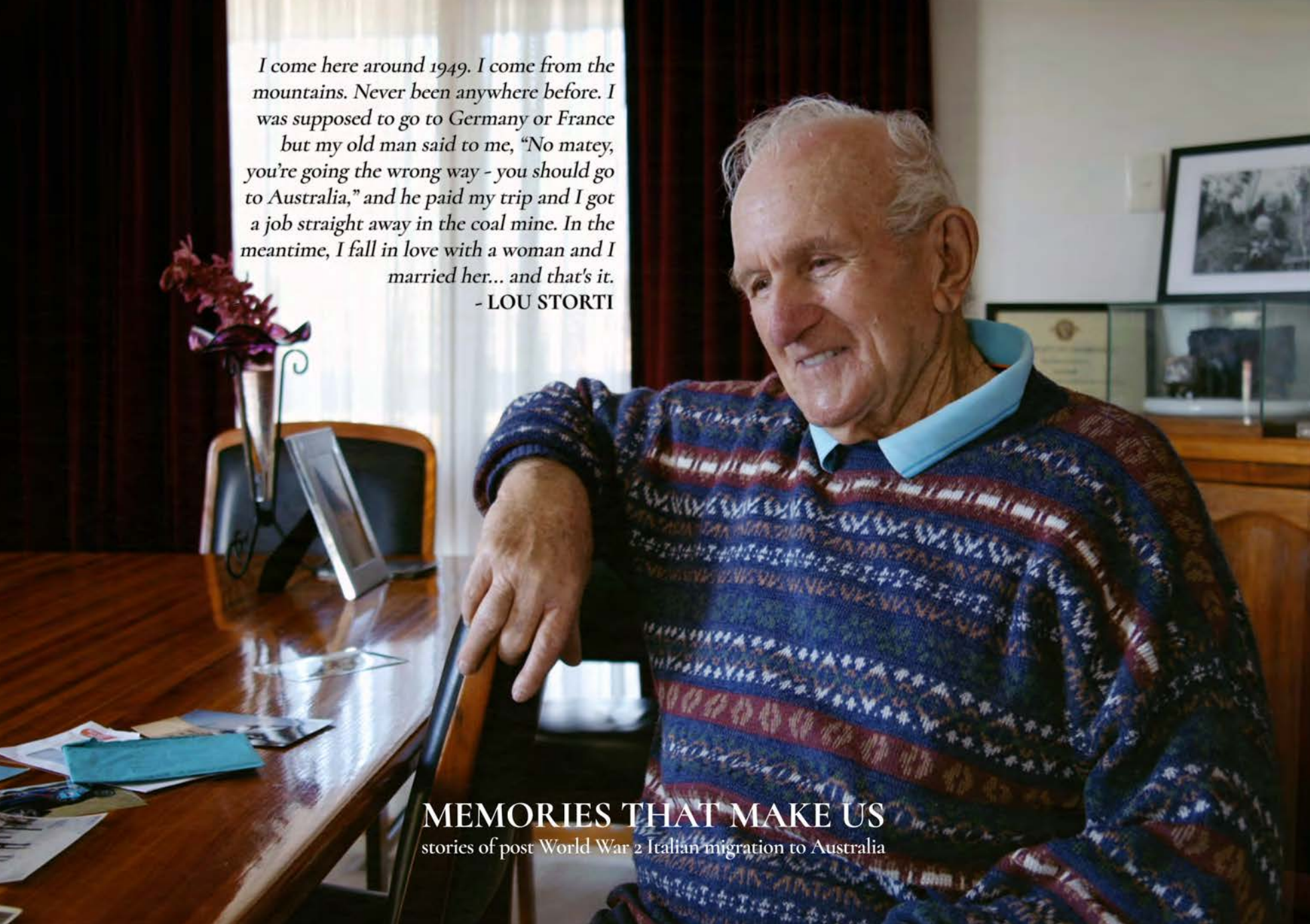


*When I got to the Port of Messina I picked up a stone and as we were about to board the ship I threw the stone in the water and I said to myself - "Italy, from now you are dead for me. You destroyed my youth, I'm leaving, I don't even want to think of you..." And from there, our life began in Australia.*

- TINA SESTI

**MEMORIES THAT MAKE US**

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia



*I come here around 1949. I come from the mountains. Never been anywhere before. I was supposed to go to Germany or France but my old man said to me, "No matey, you're going the wrong way - you should go to Australia," and he paid my trip and I got a job straight away in the coal mine. In the meantime, I fall in love with a woman and I married her... and that's it.*


- LOU STORTI

**MEMORIES THAT MAKE US**  
stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

*When I went back to Italy, I felt at home straight away in Trieste... I'm still Italian at heart even though I was only a little baby when we left. Going back... was a homecoming.*

*- MILLIE SCHILLICK*


**MEMORIES THAT MAKE US**  
stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia



*I was born in a place called Bivongi in Calabria in Italy in 1947. We arrived in Melbourne in March 1957. My parents brought cooking pans and everything, because they were told there was nothing in Australia, that you lived in wooden houses... and their vision was living in log cabins. They got a big surprise when they came over...*

*- NICK SITA*

**MEMORIES THAT MAKE US**  
stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia



*I worked in a shoe factory for just two months. That's it! And then, my boyfriend came, I got married, had 5 children and stayed home - and work a lot. All day. My husband and I got along together. He was always lovely.*  
- MARIA DOMENICA DE LEO

**MEMORIES THAT MAKE US**  
stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

## BIOGRAPHIES



**Martin Potter - Director, Producer**

Martin is a transmedia producer, documentary filmmaker and academic. Martin works on participatory media and art projects with communities across Australia, Cambodia, West Papua, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and India. His focus as a practitioner is on facilitating creative spaces across a range of media and geographical settings allowing diverse, textured narratives to emerge that facilitate re-imagination of place and community. His transmedia projects include SxSW Interactive Community Champion *Big Stories, Small Towns* (bigstories.com.au), the acclaimed *White Building* project in Cambodia (whitebuilding.org), *Island Connect* (Sri Lanka, supported by US-Aid) and *Stereopublic: Crowdsourcing the Quiet*, winner of a TED Award. His works have been showcased at over 100 film, art and technology festivals internationally including IDFA, the Venice Biennale, DocFest UK, Melbourne International Film Festival and Adelaide Festival.



**Toija Cinque - Producer**

Toija Cinque is Associate Professor in Communication (Digital Media) in the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University. She has written widely on internet use and regulation, is on the editorial board for *New Scholar* journal, has edited the *Cinema Journal* and in 2021 was editor of a special issue 'Dark' for *Continuum*. Her published books include *Materializing Digital Futures: Touch, Movement, Sound and Vision* (Bloomsbury, 2022); *Changing Media Landscapes: Visual Networking* (Oxford University Press, 2015); *Communication, Digital Media and Everyday Life* (Oxford University Press, 2015, co-authored); *New Media in Everyday Life* (Oxford University Press, 2012, co-authored); and the forthcoming *Digital Media Ecologies* (Routledge, 2024). Toija's research and teaching areas include Media, Communications and Technology Studies with projects focussed on using emerging screens and digital technologies for educational effect and change.



**Sean Redmond - Producer**

Sean is Professor of Screen and Design in the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University. Sean's research interests include: stardom and celebrity; genre studies, and science fiction cinema; film authorship; film sound; film and affect; Asian cinema; and whiteness studies. Sean utilises various forms of empirical methods in his research including eye tracking, autoethnography, and the 'storying the self' method to creatively realise his works which span curatorial practices, video installation, video essay and transmedia. Sean edits the journal *Celebrity Studies*, short-listed for the best new academic journal 2011. He is a prolific author, writing and editing 18 books including *Celebrity* (Routledge, 2019); *Liquid Space: Digital Age Science Fiction Film and Television* (IB Taurus, 2017); *Celebrity and the Media* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); and *Flowering Blood: The Cinema of Takeshi Kitano* (Columbia University Press, 2013).

# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

## BIOGRAPHIES



**Marco Fedi - Executive Producer**

Marco Fedi landed in Australia in 1983, directly from Ascoli Piceno, in the Marche Region of Italy. He settled initially in Adelaide, his wife's home town. Marco and his family then moved to Melbourne in 1992 where Marco worked as a welfare worker for the migrant organisation FILEF, then as National Coordinator of the Patronato INCA-CGIL, handling social security claims. Following this, Marco directed the multimedia and television facility at the CO.AS.IT. Italian Assistance Association, before entering the Italian Parliament in the House of Representatives, spending 12 years in Rome. Marco was a member of the Foreign Affairs Permanent Committee and the President of the Italian-Australian Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Group. He returned to Melbourne in 2018 to take up the role of Chief Executive Officer of CO.AS.IT. which has provided a range of welfare and cultural services to the Italian and wider Australian community for more than 50 years.



**Riccardo Schirru - Senior Researcher**

Riccardo Schirru is a journalist at Il Globo and La Fiamma, specialising in federal news and providing a weekly social commentary on current affairs. Riccardo's journalism captures the issues, successes, trials and tribulations of the Italian diaspora in Australia, his pen expressing the deep and rich ways that Italian migrants have shaped this country. He has worked with a host of media outlets in Australia from radio station Rete Italia to the national cultural broadcaster SBS. Riccardo was the person who set the Memories That Make Us project in train, realising that a whole generation of post war Italian migrants had stories that needed to be told, shared and preserved and has been a guiding hand throughout the project as well as interviewing many of the story keepers and communities along the way.



**Fotis Kapetopoulos - Production Manager**

Fotis has over 25 years experience in arts and culture management. He was the Multicultural Media and Policy Adviser for Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu, advising the Premier, Chief of Staff and Department of Premier and Cabinet. He heads Kape Communications, specialising in culturally diverse communications and research. Fotis writes for Daily Review, Neos Kosmos, and was Editor of the English edition of Neos Kosmos, Australia's leading Greek media outlet. From 1993 to 2001, Fotis headed Multicultural Arts Victoria, (MAV). As CEO of MAV he received an Arts Victoria Arts Management Leadership Award, a Smithsonian Fellowship and an Asialink Arts Management Residency at the National Arts Council of Singapore. Fotis lectures regularly on marketing, branding and diversity in the arts at RMIT University, Melbourne Polytechnic and the University of Melbourne.

# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

# PRESS

## Sharing stories of new life

disruptr

ABOUT INNOVATION HEALTH SOCIETY ENVIRONMENT VIDEOS

Home Society



**BLASTS FROM THE PAST** Sharing migrant memories (from left) Maria Bolzonello, Giuseppina Biola, Francesco Contardo (Co.As.IT. researcher) and Riccardo Schirru (senior researcher at Deakin and journalist at Il Globo).

The exhibition will be composed of 12 'memory rooms', each of which will be jointly made and curated by one of the participants and an artist.

The inspiration for each memory room will be a treasure chest or bauletto, supported by the participant, which initiates a space for arousing a remembrance state of mind," Prof Redmond said.

Dr Toja Cinque noted: "In terms of storytelling, there is often an imposed notion of 'I tell a story' and 'You must listen'."

"The aim of the interactive website is to flip this notion by taking the individual's point of view."

Dr Martin Potter, who is curating the documentary which will feature the personal stories of just some of the thousands of Italian migrants who settled in Victoria after 1945, said: "Very commonly, I have a living memory of itself, an awareness of a collective identity woven from thousands of individual stories."

"These are the stories of multicultural Australia, of the challenges and achievements of migration, the memories that make and shape us all for the better."



Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria. At the conclusion of World War II, over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a new chance to share their stories.

## Memories That Make Us

Earlier this year CO.AS.IT. engaged into a long term partnership with Deakin University to collect, archive and preserve the memories of Italian post-war migrants in Victoria.



This wealth of knowledge is at risk of being lost forever as members of that initial wave of migration begin to age and pass away. The inestimable wealth of knowledge being lost due to no prior collection existing is immeasurable. By collecting the real life stories of these members of our community not only will we be setting the foundations for future ethno-related research in Australia and internationally, but a wealth of knowledge that will forever live on. Preserving these memories is essential to the wider preservation of Italian identity in Australia. The experiences faced by Italian post-war migrants, directly influenced the way Australia changed decades later. Future generations, when asking themselves "who am I and where do I come from?", will be able to get a clear answer thanks to these archives that we are putting together. The preservation of our identity as either Italian migrants ourselves or as descendants of Italian migrants (Italo-Australians) hinges on the continuous collection of the memories and experiences on those who came before us.

CO.AS.IT. and Deakin University will be conducting initial questionnaires, focus groups and interview sessions with over 200 Italian post-war migrants aged over 70 years of age. Following the collection of these stories, an archive will be put together and made accessible to all through an online portal as well as various podcasts, radio presentations and a documentary to be set up following data collection.

Preserving these memories is but the first step in cementing the legacy of the generations that came before us for the benefit of generations to come.

Should you wish to take part in or have any questions about the project please do not hesitate to e-mail your queries to Francesco Contardo at fcontardo@coasit.com.au or call him at 9349 9029 during business hours.

*Il CO.AS.IT. assieme alla Deakin University ha intrapreso un progetto ambizioso che raccoglierà le storie di oltre duecento migranti italiani, immigrati nel Victoria nel dopoguerra, mappandone le esperienze, le vite, i ricordi, le difficoltà e i successi. In futuro, oltre a rappresentare un patrimonio di inestimabile valore culturale, questa raccolta comprensiva di memorie rappresenterà non solo la storia dei nostri connazionali ma una piattaforma, un prototipo, da usare per altri progetti simili per altre ricerche condotte per simili scopi da altri gruppi culturali.*

*Il progetto è solo il primo passo di una lunga serie che permetterà la collezione e la conservazione di memorie appartenenti a coloro che ci precedettero oltre alla pubblicazione di materiali di significato internazionale.*

### Let their stories be heard

At the conclusion of World War II over 340,000 Italian migrants fled in search of a better life in Australia.

Now, academics from Deakin University, in partnership with Co.As.IT, want to give these individuals a chance to share their stories.

"If it has not been told it cannot be remembered."

A new partnership project between Co.As.IT and Deakin University is aiming to give a voice to Italian migrants.

Memories that make us story-telling Italian migration to Victoria will be a community project led by Professor Sean Redmond, Dr Toja Cinque and Dr Martin Potter in the School of Communication and Creative Arts, Deakin University, along with Project Manager Fohi Kapetopoulos and Senior Researcher Riccardo Schirru.



## Un nuovo progetto tra il Co.As.It. e la Deakin University



Da sinistra: Francesco Contardo, Paolo Baracchi e Marco Felli del CoAsit, Toja Cinque e Sean Redmond della Deakin University, Fohi Kapetopoulos della Sage Communication e Martin Potter, Deakin University

Il Co.As.IT. e la Deakin University hanno firmato uno storico accordo, il mese scorso, per la realizzazione di *Memories that Make Us: Storying Italian Migration to Victoria* (Storie che formano collezione di ricordi dell'immigrazione italiana nel Victoria). Il progetto è finalizzato a documentare e sviluppare un archivio digitale, e realizzare un sito web e un documentario, sulle storie dell'immigrazione italiana del dopoguerra, nello Stato del Victoria.

Il direttore esecutivo, facente funzioni, del Co.As.IT, Marco Felli, ha commentato la firma dell'accordo ricordando che con l'invecchiamento e la scomparsa degli immigrati del dopoguerra, rischiamo di perdere la storia di uno dei più importanti insediamenti nel Victoria: "Questo non è solo un progetto per la comunità italiana, ma per l'intera Australia, e per la diaspора italiana globale: ha detto - e il Co.As.IT. è orgoglioso di partecipare allo sviluppo e la realizzazione di un progetto che avrà implicazioni internazionali, con figli e nipoti, che avranno modo di conoscere meglio la vita e la storia dei loro padri e nonni".

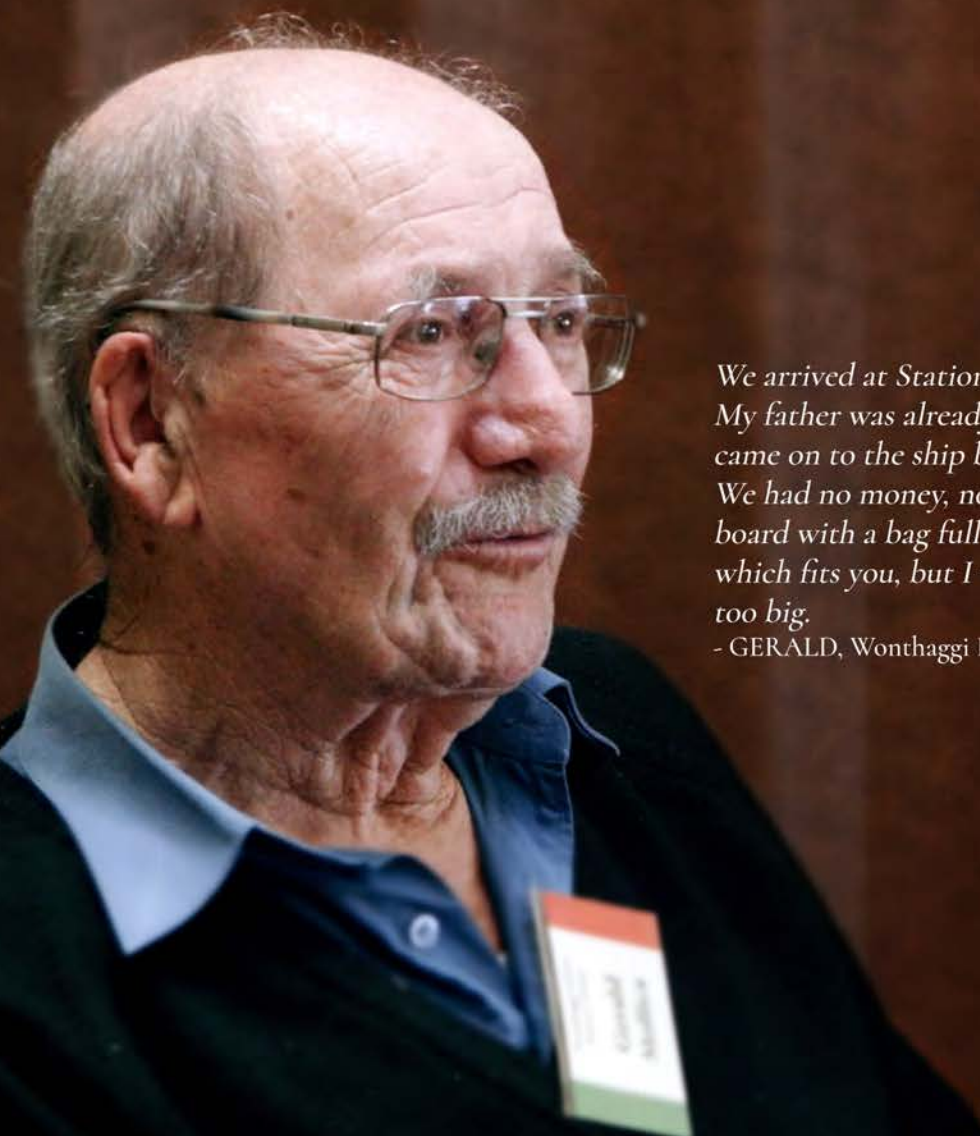
Il professor Sean Redmond, direttore del dipartimento di Arti visive e docente della facoltà d'Arte dell'Università Deakin è convinto che il progetto diventerà un modello per tutte le comunità di migranti in Australia nel mondo. "Questo non è un documento storico, ma il testamento digitale della presenza dell'immigrazione italiana del dopoguerra, uno dei gruppi maggiori di migranti che hanno completamente trasformato l'Australia". Il progetto si articolerà in una serie di interviste audio/visive e di filmati sui ricordi dei migranti italiani in Australia, presentati in un sito web, al Co.As.IT. e all'Università Deakin. Sean Redmond ha aggiunto che *Memories that Make Us* ("Storie che formano collezione di ricordi") è un progetto che per la natura dell'immigrazione, sono in grado di sopravvivere. Toja Cinque, docente di Arti visive e design presso l'Università Deakin ha detto che "questo progetto rispecchia le vite reali, gli amori, le perdite, le sfide, le avventure e le celebrazioni dell'immigrazione italiana del dopoguerra". Questo è un progetto cofinanziato dal Co.As.IT. e dalla Deakin University.

RICCARDO SCHIRRU

PRESS CLIPPINGS  
Geelong Advertiser, Disruptr magazine  
Il Globo and Mosaic Magazine

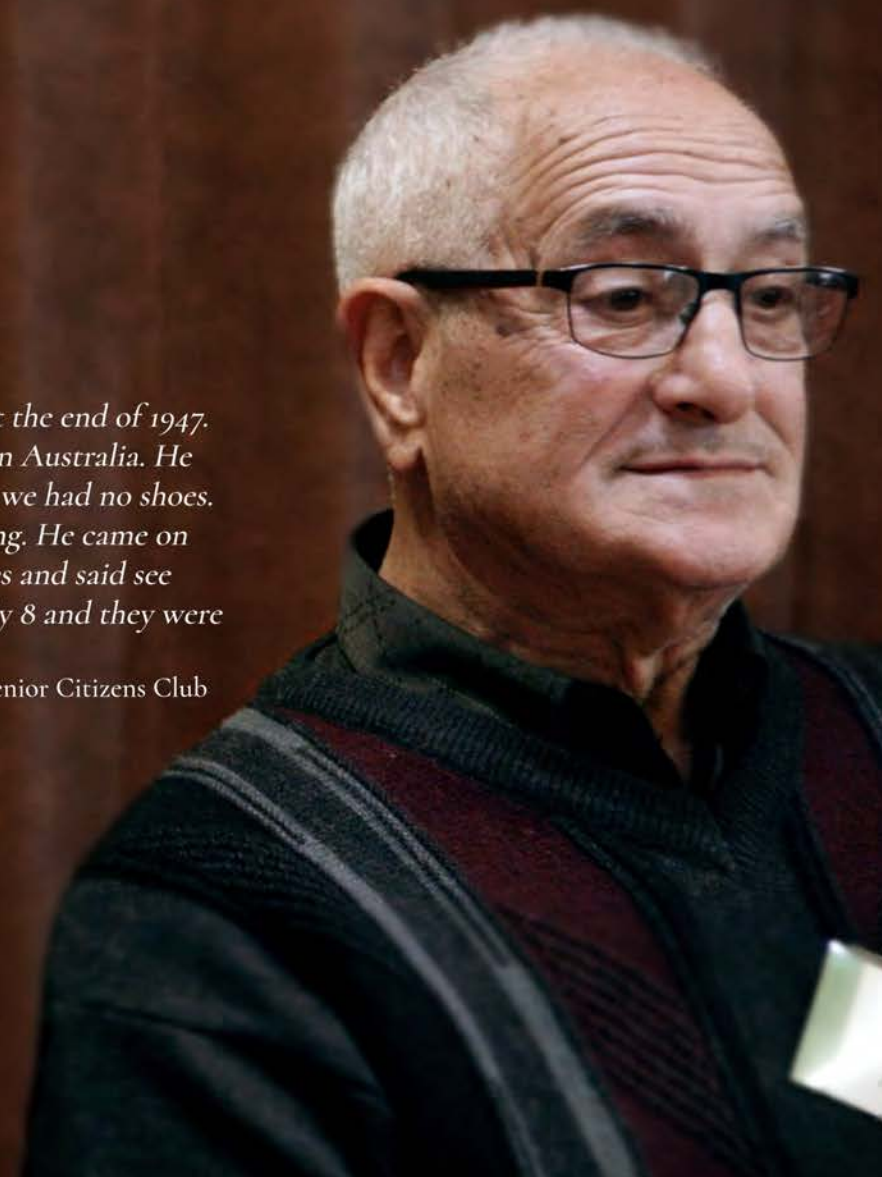
# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia



*We arrived at Station Pier at the end of 1947. My father was already here in Australia. He came on to the ship because we had no shoes. We had no money, no nothing. He came on board with a bag full of shoes and said see which fits you, but I was only 8 and they were too big.*

- GERALD, Wonthaggi Italian Senior Citizens Club



# MEMORIES THAT MAKE US

stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia

## CREDITS

**DIRECTOR** Martin Potter

**PRODUCERS** Tojja Cinque, Martin Potter  
and Sean Redmond

### FEATURING

Tina Sesti, Lou Storti, Millie Schillick, Nick  
Sita and Maria Domenica De Leo

### WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF

Lella Cariddi, Giancarlo Giusti, Pina Ciacià,  
Michael Bonacci, Vito and Chiara Cilauro,  
Gruppo Culturale Pugliese D'Australia, Assisi  
Senior Citizens, Korumburra Italian Social  
Club and the Wonthaggi Italian Senior  
Citizens Club

### FUNDED AND SUPPORTED BY

CO.AS.IT. Italian Assistance Association  
School of Communication and Creative Arts,  
Deakin University

### SPECIAL THANKS

Marco Fedi

## TECHNICAL INFORMATION

**DURATION** 72 mins

**LANGUAGE** English and Italian (with English subtitles)

**ASPECT RATIO** 16: 9

**SOUND** Stereo 48KhZ

**DELIVERY FORMAT** DCP (versioning negotiable)

**WEBSITE** [memoriesthatmakeus.today](http://memoriesthatmakeus.today)

### MEDIA ENQUIRIES


Fotis Kapetopoulos  
[fotis@kape.com.au](mailto:fotis@kape.com.au)

### DISTRIBUTION ENQUIRIES

Martin Potter  
[martin.potter@deakin.edu.au](mailto:martin.potter@deakin.edu.au)

The Producers would like to acknowledge the  
Wadawurrung, Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of  
the Kulin nations, the traditional owners of the lands on  
which this project was filmed.





*Reality fades and everything becomes memory.  
Even you, little by little,  
you ceased to be a desire  
and you became a memory.*  
**Alessandro Baricco**

**MEMORIES THAT MAKE US**  
stories of post World War 2 Italian migration to Australia