



Speech by
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

Hansard Thursday, 4 June 2009

ITALIAN WEEK

Ms GRACE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (10.14 pm): On Saturday, 20 May 2009 I had the pleasure of representing the Premier at the Co.As.It. Annual Italian Week Ball in the presence of His Excellency Dr Gian Ludovico De Martino di Montegiordano, Italian Ambassador to Australia; Annastacia Palaszczuk, Minister for Disability Services and Multicultural Affairs; and Justine Elliot, federal Minister for Ageing. The ball was held this year as part of the Italian Week 2009 celebrations, which are in their third year and ran from 26 May to 2 June.

The Queensland government strongly supports Italian Week, which is an example of the multicultural nature of our state and which accords with the Bligh government's Toward Q2 vision to facilitate a truly multicultural and thereby fair society in Queensland. It is also a smart thing to do, as the teaching and use of Italian language, culture and cuisine makes Queensland a more attractive place for tourists and more competitive in business and trade.

Queensland has a very strong presence in all things Italian. In fact, over 100,000 Queensland people are of Italian origin. Of those, 27,000 are Italian speakers and around 15,000 are Italian citizens. Italians are one of the largest ethnic groups in the state. Nearly 80 per cent of them are concentrated in the city of Brisbane.

As we know, this year Queensland is celebrating its 150th anniversary, and Italians the world over celebrate the Italian national day on 2 June. Interestingly, both the Italian state and self-governing Queensland were born in the same month of the same year: June 1859. As far back as 1891, Italian migrants arrived in North Queensland to work in the cane fields, where some soon became industry leaders. It was an absolute pleasure to have been part of the recent Italian Festival, held in Ingham.

After 1950, the nature of the Italian community in Queensland changed as cane cutting gave way to employment opportunities as labourers and painters in the post-1950 building boom. It was around this time that Brisbane became home to the majority of Queenslanders of Italian origin.

Despite the predictions of some about the death of Italian culture in Queensland, there has been a surge of Italianita that has been fuelled by interaction between Australia and Italy and driven by the second and third generations of those Queenslanders with Italian ancestry, of whom I am a proud member. I congratulate the producer of this year's Italian Week festivities, Mr Alessandro Sorbello, and Dr Francesco Capecci, Italian Consul for Queensland and the Northern Territory, on the success of this year's Italian Week. I predict that Italian Week will quickly become a major event on Queensland's multicultural calendar.

In conclusion, I refer to the earthquake earlier this year that devastated the region of Abruzzo, bringing great sadness to many families in Italy and around the world. I have been elected chair of the Queensland Australian Abruzzo Earthquake Appeal Fund and warmly welcome the acceptance of Premier Anna Bligh to become Queensland's patron of the appeal. I thank the Premier for contributing \$10,000 on behalf of the people of Queensland to the appeal. Any members who want to contribute can do so through my office.