



## PRIME MINISTER

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### ITALIAN COMMITTEE OF CO-ORDINATION BALL

The Italian Community is a very significant - and much respected - part of the Australian community. It was not always so significant. At Federation, about 95% of immigrant Australians were of British descent - only some 5,000 people out of 3.7 million were of Italian descent. That's about 1/8th of one per cent of the population!

Australia today, with our very large and important Italian community, is far richer in diversity. Our customs, our traditions, our lifestyles have benefitted enormously from your influence.

I know you are proud to be Australians, and equally proud of your own distinctive and rich culture. It needs to be said that Australian society is not weakened, it is strengthened by diversity. One can love Australia, and participate fully in Australian life - and at the same time preserve one's cultural heritage.

I am particularly pleased to see Frank Galbally here tonight. As many of you would know, he has been three times decorated by the Italian Government for his services to the Italian community in Australia. He recently chaired a review of the services available to migrants upon their arrival in Australia. His review recommended a new deal for migrants - and the Government, even in these times of economic restraint, decided to adopt his recommendations.

We are setting up sixteen centres which will give English orientation courses for new migrants; we are spending an additional \$10 million teaching English to migrant children; we are stepping up English classes for adult migrants; we are extending the Government's telephone interpreter service; we are going to establish a new Institute of Multi-Cultural Affairs; and more funds are to be given to ethnic associations to employ their own welfare workers, health workers and people skilled in assisting children and the aged.

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This last initiative will be of direct benefit to many of the 40 Italian clubs represented here tonight. The Italian Community is noted for the strength of its community organisations. You have established a network of institutions sustaining your community, and I applaud your desire to be self-supporting, without undue reliance on government.

For all these expenditures and programmes to be truly effective, the Government believes it is of crucial importance that ethnic communities themselves be closely involved in their implementation. Those senior officials who have been given the task of co-ordinating the new programmes are at the present time actively consulting a variety of ethnic and voluntary agencies.

Australia has long offered to people of all nations freedom of opportunity to achieve and create, freedom to rise to the top of their professions and occupations. Over the last three years, the Government has been striving to restore Australia's capacities to offer people such freedom of opportunity. We have been striving to restore the economy, to give people renewed incentive and fair reward for achievement.

This has been a difficult period - we have faced tough decisions and we have made them.

Australia is now on the threshold of a new era of growth and prosperity. We can realise the promise which the next decade holds for us if, through a partnership of Government and people, we can work effectively together, having confidence in our capacity and faith in Australia's future.