

Its architect, Romaldo Giurgola, is part of the worldwide family of people of Italian descent. And the entrance hall through which you passed to enter this room features extensive use of Italian marbles.

Mr President,

It is impossible fully to describe the extent and the breadth of the Italian contribution to Australia.

Italians have made their mark in every profession, in every factory, in every city and town in Australia.

Of course Italians have been prominent in sports which would be familiar to you, such as Soccer. But they have also been major contributors in sports with a particularly Australian character. The names Silvagni, Polinelli, Barassi, Dipierdomenico will be familiar to any follower of VFL Football. Veletta and Dimattina are outstanding names among Australia's first-class cricketers.

I am sure all Italians wherever they live were inspired when on the final day of the Seoul Olympics, Gelindo Bordin won Italy's first gold medal in the marathon.

Let me assure you we were equally proud of the performance of the Australian runners, not least fifth place getter, Steve Moneghetti, whose family is of Italian origin.

In business, entrepreneurs such as Claudio Alcorso and Franco Belgiorno-Nettis have made their mark. Italian-Australians have also been prominent in politics - in particular, I am proud to say, through the Australian Labor Party.

Let me also make special mention of the Chairman of my Government's Advisory Council on Multicultural Affairs, Justice Sir James Gobbo, whose contributions to Australian public life have been of enduring significance.

It is a particular pleasure to know that you will be visiting Melbourne, which perhaps more than any other place in Australia is identified as the home of Italian culture.

I look forward to showing you around the Lygon Street Festa which I think you will find is one of the liveliest open air community festivals.

Melbourne, of course, has just played host to one of the great cultural events of our calendar, the Spoleto Festival under the patronage of maestro Gian Carlo Menotti.

But the cultural travel is not all one way. The landscape and atmosphere of your home country have always exercised a fascination for artists seeking inspiration.

And to this day the hills of Tuscany provide a second home to an influential band of Australian artists including the writer, David Malouf, and the artist, Jeffrey Smart.

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In the same vein, we are very pleased now to have our own pavilion at the Venice Biennale, providing our artists with a means of regular exhibition at what is one of the world's most prestigious art events.

I am also pleased to note the progress being made towards the establishment in Rome of the Arthur Boyd Australian Centre.

Thanks to the generosity of Arthur Boyd, one of Australia's most distinguished artists, serious work can now be done towards providing an institutional base for Australian artists and scholars working in Italy - and for Italians eager to learn more about Australia.

Mr President,

As you move around this country, you will meet a great many representatives of the Italian community.

Even after their immigration to a new home, Italian Australians have retained a warm affection for their country of birth.

By nurturing their own customs and traditions, Italian Australians have succeeded not only in becoming valued builders of Australian society but also in sharing the generous spirit of Italian culture with other Australians.

This sort of participation is the very essence of multiculturalism, and my Government is very proud of the contribution of Italian Australians to the development of our multicultural society.

Mr President,

I have mentioned some of the cultural and human links between our two countries.

But I would also like to welcome you here specifically as the head of one of the world's leading economic powers. Your visit serves to remind us of Italy's outstanding achievements in industrial and technological development.

The Italian pavilion at Expo '88 has been most successful in demonstrating this aspect of modern Italy to its thousands of interested visitors.

Traditionally our trade relationship has involved Australian raw materials, notably wool, as inputs to Italian manufactures.

But as our economies change, and in particular as the spectacular growth of the Asia-Pacific region continues, I would encourage Italian businesspeople to pay regard to the investment potential of Australia. We have much to offer, both in our own right and as an entry to the markets of our region: our stable political environment, our efficient financial system, our abundant natural resources, our well qualified reservoir of technical and professional expertise, and our highly favourable tax structure.

The potential Australia provides for European countries looking for a springboard into the lucrative and developing financial and trading centres of this region cannot be overemphasised.

The economic relationship between Australia and Italy is particularly important at the moment because of the movement towards a single European market in 1992.

The Australian Government is keenly interested in this process. Already, the European Community, taken as a whole, ranks as our second largest export market and our largest source of imports.

The development of a single market with 320 million inhabitants - a market larger than any other in the industrialised world - will surely have a profound impact on global economic and trading relationships.

I would like to reiterate that Australia strongly believes that the positive rewards of the single market will not be reaped if an inward looking, "fortress Europe" approach is allowed to develop.

We look, in particular, to further progress being made in winding back inefficient agricultural subsidies under the Common Agricultural Policy.

We hope that recognition of the benefits likely to flow from a strong and open European economy will prevail over any concerns about competition from outside.

Already Australia's most successful and innovative companies are developing strategies for new operations in Europe, taking account of the opportunities which should arise from the single market.

Mr President,

This year, as you know Australia is celebrating two hundred years of European settlement.

Your own visit and visits by many other world leaders to share our Bicentennial have added inestimably to our enjoyment of these celebrations.

I was delighted to see the "Jancri" amongst the Tall Ships in Sydney Harbor earlier this year and to learn that she had been sponsored by the Italian community in Australia.

Among a number of Italian contributions to the Bicentennial, let me single out one, Mr President, for special thanks. Your Government has most generously sponsored "Italy on Stage", a brilliant and exciting program of events which make a fitting tribute to Italy's place in Australian history.

Mr President,

I have spoken of a range of areas where Australian and Italian interests intersect. Our advancement of mutual interests in all these areas is ultimately and crucially based on the warmth and closeness in the relationships between the people of our two countries.

I know that your visit will give a special boost to our relationship. I again welcome you and your most distinguished party to Australia and wish you a most enjoyable visit.
