

MAMMA LENA CELEBRATES

One of the Italian community's most respected women, radio and print journalist, and long time activist, Mamma Lena Morelli recently celebrated her 80th birthday with many distinguished guests.

Mamma Lena (Lena Gustin), of Bankstown, has been called a living legend due to her selfless dedication to helping others.

She is well known to all Italians in Australia for her numerous contributions to the Italo-Australian community.

Mamma Lena, her husband Dino and family migrated to Australia in 1956.

Upon her arrival, she noticed that there was a lack of services for both new and established immigrants.

She understood the traumas and hardships faced by new Australians and set about helping them cope with their change in lifestyle.

For eight years Mamma Lena wrote in the *La Finamma* newspaper, responding to letters from readers from social problems to cooking tips, before embarking on her own Italian radio program with husband Dino as producer.

Her daily Italian radio program, broadcast on 2SM, 2CH, 2KY, then 2SER reached a wider population, advising them of services available in their local area, relaying news from the homeland and organising community activities.

Mamma Lena has provided much needed support and companionship to many Italian families,

by Maryann Jenkins

and has been officially recognised for her dedication numerous times.

In 1967 Italy awarded her its second highest honour, The Cross of the Knighthood, in recognition of her valuable work for migrants. She was the first Italo-Australian to be made a Member of the British Empire (MBE) and was presented with a gold medal by Comitato Assistenza Italiano

Fundraising Committee (CO.AS.IT) in June 1994 for her past and continued contributions to the community.

From 1978-1980 Mamma Lena was made a member of the National Women's Auxiliary Council in Canberra.

Over the years Mamma has visited immigration camps, found accommodation and employment for immigrants, encouraged immigrants to learn English, promoted the Italian language in the school system (which she lobbied the Federal Government for in 1992),

taught Italian at the Ashfield Evening College and established the Sorella Radio Childcare Centre in Fairfield.

A fitting tribute for Mamma Lena was held at the APIA Club, Leichhardt, in July, coinciding with her 80th birthday and the club's 34th anniversary.

Those who sent congratulatory wishes included Prime Minister Paul Keating, Premier John Fahoy, Michael Photios, Alexander Downer, Gough Whitlam, Bob Hawke, Bob Carr and Bronwyn Bishop.



Mamma Lena celebrates her 80th birthday with guests Brownyn Bishop, Nicky Downer and Alexander Downer.

Community briefs

Georges Hall Probus Club meeting, Bankstown Trotting Club, August 24, 10 am. Telephone 795 7991.

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Panania Senior Citizens annual meeting. President: H Callaghan; vice-presidents: M McGiannon, O Wilson; secretary: D Maugher; treasurer: H

Lee; publicity: I. Ward; towns officer: A Geers. Craft classes 1-3 pm Thursdays. Contact 772 1201.

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Bankstown View Club luncheon, Bankstown