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"Mamma" Lena and Dino ... "still as pretty as a rose"

Ship comes in for 'Mamma' and Dino

THE NATIONAL Maritime Museum's Welcome Wall at Darling Harbour unveils its first names in September and among them will be Bankstown's "Mamma" Lena and Dino Gustin.

The Welcome Wall pays tribute to the millions who have settled in Australia from almost every corner of the world and "Mamma" Lena and Dino are legendary names in Sydney's Italian community.

Married in wartime Italy in 1940, they came to Sydney in 1956 with their children Rosalba and Roberto.

Almost as soon as she arrived, Lena was working for her fellow Italian immigrants, writing in *La Fiamma* on readers' problems, telling them of activities, discussing social problems and giving cooking and sewing tips.

Dino was her producer on the ethnic programs of radio stations 2SM, 2CH, 2KY and 2SER and this career was to span almost 30 years and eventually earn her the endearing title of "Mamma" Lena.

Lena's broadcasts and writings could be said to have been many non English-speaking migrants' only source of information.

Then after encouraging so many Italians to learn English, she did the big switch and set about lobbying Canberra to teach Italian in schools and she even taught Italian for two years at an evening college in Ashfield.

She was a member of the National Women's Auxiliary Council and was awarded the MBE in 1968 and was also given a knighthood by the Italian government.

In 1988, Dino even wrote a book about his wife — *70 Years of Life in Two Countries: Italy and Australia*.

"Mamma" Lena turned 80 in 1994 and such is her standing in Sydney, she received warm and moving congratulatory messages from the then Prime Minister Paul Keating, then NSW Premier John Fahey and a host of other dignitaries.