

Dott. Fabio De Nardis
Consolo Generale d'Italia
Consolato d'Italia
61-69 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY 2000

Dear Dott. De Nardis,

I refer to your letter regarding a bilingual Italian school which would cater for the needs of students from Kindergarten to the end of secondary education.

My personal views on this matter are very much in favour of the establishment of such a school. This would fulfil a long felt need in the community which, to this point has not really had the opportunity to consider it as a real possibility.

I am pleased to say that other communities have been successful in setting up their own school along similar lines. In some cases, the catalyst has been a need for religious and cultural instruction which was not being provided through any other available system in this State. Indeed, there are now a number of these bilingual schools which are operating very successfully particularly in the Sydney area.

The Italian community in this State has demonstrated the importance of maintaining religious, cultural and linguistic links by insisting that funds be made available for the teaching of Italian both in the State and non-State systems. In addition, it is interesting to note that the majority of students from Italian background are to be found in the Catholic rather than the State system. This would indicate a need to have a greater say in the curriculum content, culture and administration of the school. Indeed, you may already be aware that over 20,000 signatures have been collected regarding the retention and expansion of Italian in all school systems. These signatures were given to the Premier of this State and were also sent to the Italian authorities in Italy.

Some of the issues which need to be resolved prior to embarking on such a laudable project are as follows:

- * Funding. Grants from the Italian Government may be available to assist. However, the bulk of funding would need to be raised through the community.

- * Appropriate site for the school. The site would need to be in a central location, (e.g. the inner west) where it could be accessible to all parts of the metropolitan area and country areas as well. You could consider making part of the school a residential or Boarding school. If the cost is prohibitive, an investigation of possible vacant schools currently belonging to the State system could be made with a view to taking out a suitable lease.
- * Curriculum. This would need to be developed in conjunction with the local authorities as well as European authorities. The NSW Board of Studies would, at some stage, need to become involved.
- * A Board of Directors. This would need to be set up in order to administer the school.
- * Recruitment of a special category of teachers. These teachers would need to have qualifications, skills and attitudes which were acceptable to the European and NSW authorities.
- * Registration of the school as an independent school. This can be done by making an application to the State system which would provide a full list of requirements to be met in order to have the school registered. (This is a most important step.)

It would be of great benefit if a campaign could be mounted to promote the benefits of such a school. In NSW, we now have the right climate to set up innovative school systems which offer a specialisation of some kind. For instance, there are now a variety of specialist schools which are proving to be very attractive to parents and students and which are enjoying a great deal of success. In addition, the acceptance of overseas teacher qualifications has been facilitated so that this may not be as big a problem as previously thought.

I would be pleased to discuss any further aspect regarding this project that you may deem important or necessary.

I warmly support the initiative and, if appropriate, I or my nominee would be pleased to become actively involved in further co-operation.

Yours sincerely,

(Lena Gustin)
President