

Mamma Lena

RADIO PROGRAMMES

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24th September, 1982.

The Regional Director,
Department of Immigration
and Ethnic Affairs,
Commonwealth Government Centre,
Chifley Square,
SYDNEY, 2000.

Dear Sir,

Re: MIGRANT WELFARE GRANT-IN-AID SCHEME.

Further to the advertisement appearing in the Sydney Morning Herald on 6 August, 1982, I would like to hereby apply to be included in the above grant.

In support of my application I advise the following details of some of my activities since coming to Australia in 1956.

RADIO:

I have produced and broadcasted programs on commercial radio for the past 25 years; 2SM for 18 months, 2CH for 14 years, 2KY for 9 years and presently with 2SER-FM. My current programs go to air each Saturday and Sunday evening between 6 & 7 p.m.

NEWSPAPERS:

Editor of the monthly magazine La Croce Del Sud for 8 years. This magazine was published by the Cappuccin Fathers of Leichhardt.
Columnist for La Fiamma for 10 years.
Editor of Settegiorni for 2 years.
(all the above were honarary positions)

TEACHER:

I taught Italian and French at Ashfield Evening College for 3 years.

SERVED ON THE FOLLOWING COMMITTEES:

Task Force to establish Radio 2EA.
CO-AS-IT at initial stage of formation.
National Women's Advisory Council.
President of N.S.W. branch of National Association of Families of Migrants.
Member of Institute of Welfare Officers.
President of Sorella Radio Welfare Fund - (CURRENT POSITION).

EDUCATION:

Teacher's Diploma.
Bachelor of Arts Degree - University of Ca Foscari, Venice, Italy.

LANGUAGES: English, Italian, French and Spanish.

Unofficially, I have been involved in community work for the past 25 years, ever since I arrived in Australia from Italy. My interest in the social welfare of the migrant and the community in general, originated from pleas for help I could not ignore, received whilst I was working as a columnist with the Italian language newspaper *La Fiamma* and as a radio announcer on 2SM's Italian Hour programs.

I soon realised there was much that needed to be done for migrants in Australia and I decided that I would devote as much of myself as I possibly could to alleviate the trauma and hardship which all migrants experience during the first years of life in a new country. This wonderful country has always provided great opportunity, but without guidance one can be lost in frustration and despair.

As a migrant myself, I understood their anguish and I feel rather fortunate that through the medium of radio and the newspapers I worked with, I could go into their homes and offer assistance.

Though most of my work has been with the Italian migrant, I never withheld assistance to anyone who approached me and in fact I had the opportunity to help many migrants of non-Italian origin.

In my own time I would answer correspondence and work out solutions using the means at my disposal. Much of the assistance requested was purely of a counselling nature whilst others may have needed an interpreter and others still needed to know their rights or obligations. I found that many newly arrived migrants out of work or sick had no idea they were entitled to social benefits.

Through the Italian newspapers and my radio programs, I launched appeals in aid of the victims of natural disasters in Italy as well as Australia. There was much to do for the flood victims of Northern Italy, the earthquake victims of Sicily and more recently in Central Italy and of course the cyclone victims of Darwin.

I visited migrant hostels helping families settle in our wonderful country and when necessary brought them clothing and goods to make their lives a little happier. I also visited hospitals and gaols. I organised educational competitions for children and adults.

Of course the social work I performed was purely of a voluntary nature. All gifts of money and clothing donated by the readers or listeners were used for the particular charity intended.

In this regard I am grateful for the support given to me by my husband Dino who never begrudged my use of part of the modest family income to pay for out-of-pocket expenses.

Probably some of the most rewarding work has been re-uniting families. Husbands and wives who abandoned their families, or children who ran away from home were re-united through my appeals on radio. As a mother these cases were indeed my prime concern.

But I have already been rewarded by my people. My most treasured possession is the affectionate title of "Mamma Lena" which the Italian community in Australia have bestowed on me. Of that I am very proud indeed.

I have also received honours from the Italian Government (Croce di Cavaliere in 1967) and from the Australian Government (M.B.E. in 1968).

As president of Sorella Radio Welfare Fund I am proud of our efforts in the construction of the Child Care and Community Centre at Fairfield. This has been a major project and it has not been easy but the contribution the Centre will make to all sections of the community in general will have been well worth the effort of the past few years. The Centre will be officially opened in time for the commencement of the new scholastic year.

Our family income is now derived from a percentage of sponsorships obtained for my 2SER programs. This is a very modest income and sufficient only for my husband and I to live on.

My involvement in social work over the past 25 years has given me much personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement in so far as I have been able to help many people. I never sought pecuniary gain.

However, it is my great wish to be able to continue the work and to be able to dedicate myself to serving the community.

Inclusion in the Migrant Welfare Grant-in-Aid Scheme will enable me to do just that, so I trust that you will give my application favourable consideration.

I can work from my office at home as well as have the use of an office at the Child Care and Community Centre at Fairfield for a few days each week. However, I will require financial assistance to operate efficiently.

I am available for an interview should you require further information.

Yours sincerely,

Mamma Lena
Cav. LENA GUSTIN, M.B.E.

- encl. 1. The Mamma Lena Story
2. Extracts of Arrivederci Roma publication dedicated to the 10th anniversary of my programs on 2CH.
3. Various articles dedicated to me
4. Various Columns written by me.