

# Addio, APiA - a piece of Italian history closes its doors after 36 years

By HELEN PITT

For Mrs Pasquale Aber and her husband, Giuseppe, Wednesday's have always meant dinner at the APiA Club - meeting friends and sometimes taking home plates of olives, coffee and packs of spaghetti.

But next Wednesday they will stay home. The APiA Club, where they have met friends and family for 36 years, closed its doors yesterday.

At the last round of expression was packed and the old soccer trophies, packed for storage, members of the troubled club gathered last night for an emotional Sicilian-style farewell to Australia's oldest Italian club.

As the final game of bingo was called, children of the Italian migrants who founded the club in 1960 voted to register it as a sporting place for second-generation Italian-Australians. But unless they can raise \$5.25 million to save it by the end of this month, it will be bulldozed and turned into a public waterfront trail course.

From its humble beginning in a rented room in Norton Street, Leichhardt, in 1954, the Association's Polignone (Ilio-Australian-Italian) All Sports Association Club grew to a peak of 15,000 members in its own grand-stands, premium bottle bar, Cafe Bar, a ballroom, indoor further west and the club's main was dropped from the National Soccer League. It began tracking



up to a current 39 million debt. Yesterday, Mr Louie Marvati, the daughter of the club's founding president, made an impassioned plea to keep the club alive: "Now we have to work together again just like

we did 36 years ago, and we are appealing to the second generation of Italians to show we are still a proud community." Many of the second generation want the 1960-style building restored but made more rib-

bled to current Italians. A cinema show-casino European art-house film, a design museum to show off Italian culture and a new casino shop are among suggestions for additional uses for the club.

If 2,000 members and some business people have been asked to buy shares in a new venture, APiA Holdings, where directors, four children of the foundation members, have raised more than \$1.5 million. Whatever the outcome of the fundraising drive over the next 10 days, the Abers are at a loss for what to do next week. "It's a very sad day for us all," Victoria's home "what we will do next Wednesday," Mr Aber said.



Their number is up... sad members play the last bingo game at the APiA Club last night.

## LOOK WHAT'S COMING DOWN.



### THE END OF FINANCIAL YEAR

## 'Victim' tells of abuse and police pay-offs

By MALCOLM BROWN

A prominent Wollongong citizen, who served on the city council, had accused a 15-year-old boy in a car park toilet block, had sex with him and then rushed him to the car as he went to school. Court proceedings, the Police Magistrate heard yesterday.

W26, now aged 37, gave details of sex by the prominent person, W26, who was at that time driving a black LTD Ford with personalised numberplates, and who has been called to the royal commission to give evidence.



But it was not W26's first sexual encounter. By the age of 13, he had encountered the farmer Lord Mayor of Wollongong, Tony Morris, at the suburbs of Wollongong. Morris had taken him up in an aeroplane, fondled him and intro-

ductions included three pinball parlours which Brown apparently operated in Sydney, including one at Chalmers, a Sydney boys' home, where Brown had a boy, W20, acting as his recruiting agent, and the naval cadets, where a young man, W21, was an agent.

W26 described terms used in the proceedings: the "Three were made a reference to young boys' crackling, male prostitution, rough trade, female who was 'not pretty', female who was 'not pretty', male, someone considered dangerous, in that they might not protect the men exploiting them."

There had been police raids. But several cases of alcohol would be put on the bar before the raid occurred. They would be removed by the police and not returned.

A police informant at Darlinghurst had said to the boy after one raid that "we were to remember our false names and addresses or we would not be going home". Johnny McLean had an arrangement where he paid "rent" of \$5 per hand for the people arrested.

W26 was not aware of any proceedings having been taken against him while he was at Campbell's, nor had he at any stage appeared in any court or relation to the cases in the commission.

In the early to mid-1970s, an incident occurred where a young boy complained to police that he had been sexually assaulted by McLean and Brown of the commission.