



IL GIORNALE

NEWSLETTER FROM NEW ITALY MUSEUM INC.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

It is wonderful to experience the hive of activity at Historic New Italy at the moment. **The Café has undergone a major refurbishment.** This upgrade has been a long time coming, and the new design will significantly improve workflow, service efficiency, and the overall visitor experience. Now completed, the Café can offer an expanded menu featuring a range of Italian dishes - a welcome enhancement that will strengthen the cultural connection that lies at the heart of our site. Drop by and let us know what you think!

Another positive initiative has been the development of weekend **"Pop Up" shops operating on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays.** These small stalls provide local artisans, hobbyists and small scale producers with an opportunity to showcase and sell their wares, adding vibrancy and diversity to the visitor experience. Their popularity is offering valuable insight into our future planning. Should demand continue, NIMI may consider constructing small permanent structures for those seeking a more established presence. Not only would this support local enterprise, but it would also create additional income streams for NIMI - an increasingly important consideration as volunteer numbers decline and the need to hire contractors grows. Diversifying our revenue sources will safeguard the sustainability of Historic New Italy.

Unfortunately, we continue to experience **vandalism** of our bollard lights, which seem to have become a target for mischief. While disappointing, this behavior has strengthened our resolve to replace the bollards with more robust street lighting once suitable options are identified. In the meantime, our ever-reliable handyman Steve continues to resurrect the damaged lights - at least until the next round of mischief. His persistence is greatly appreciated.

In recent months we were visited by **Professor James Daughton, a Professor of Modern History at Stanford University, USA.** Professor Daughton is currently contracted by the prestigious publishing house WW Norton & Co. to write a book on the Port Breton colony. Norton, founded in 1923, is the oldest and largest employee-owned publishing house in the United States, known for its progressive vision and its roster of award winning authors, including Pulitzer and Nobel Prize recipients.

Professor Daughton visited our region in June, following up on contacts we provided i.e. Anne-Gabrielle Thompson (*Turmoil, Tragedy to Triumph*) and Rosemary Harrigan (*They Were Expeditioners*). He spent time at our site before departing Australia for Port Breton. His feedback was deeply encouraging: "The museum is really an impressive place, especially considering the fact that it is essentially entirely run by volunteers. I was also very enthused to see how many people stopped by and looked at the exhibits. A remarkable testament to their commitment to preserving the past; it warms this old historian's heart." We are very proud of the Museums group, for their hard work, care, and consistency. Professor Daughton's words are a wonderful recognition of what they achieve week after week, and we are grateful for his kind acknowledgment. We look forward to receiving a copy of his book once published, and I will endeavor to secure additional copies for our gift shop.

Committee member, Anna Lagerstedt's long-held wish for seating in the dog park has been realised! A successful **Richmond Valley Council's Community Financial Assistance Program** grant application, has enabled the installation of two new park benches - see below.

Casa Vecchia Gift Shop and the Italian Pavilion project had a stall at the **2026 LisAmore!** It was a joyful reminder that Italian culture, food and community spirit remain strong in the Northern Rivers region.

While our recent expression of interest for a major grant to upgrade our toilets and septic system through the **Community Building Partnerships program** was unsuccessful, we remain determined. A big thank you to Brian Pezzutti for all his hard work on this. We are now pursuing an infrastructure grant through Club Grants. Fingers crossed!.

Historic New Italy continues to evolve, supported by the passion of our volunteers, the interest of our visitors, and the strength of our community partnerships. Thank you to everyone who contributes to keeping our history alive and thank you to our members for your ongoing support.

with warm regards

Gail Williams - President, NIMI



Left to right: The refurbished New Italy Café; the visiting Professor James Daughton; two new benches in situ in the Off-Leash Dog Park.

MONUMENT TO THE PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T SURVIVE THE MARQUIS DE RAYS EXPEDITION

As published Autumn 2026 'Il Giornale', NIMI is planning towards a new monument to honour those who did not complete the journey. If descendants' families would like to share their stories contact: museums@newitaly.org.au

EARLY DAYS OF NEW ITALY SETTLEMENT:

An early account of settlement and lifestyle by an unknown New Italy settler (Part 3)



Salami-making display at New Italy Museum

The making of salami (an Italian sausage) was a real ritual. A young pig would be bought and fed for six to nine months. Its weight when killed would be from 200 to 400 lbs. if it was a sow and she was in season she would not be killed. Pigs would always be killed before full moon. Some of the settlers killed their own steer or fat cow for making salami. We used to get ours from the butcher and my father always ordered

the hind quarters of a bullock. Only the best of the meat and also of the pig was kept out. All of this was cut up in the early days on a big chopping block like you see in a country butcher's shop. The pork would be cut up first. A small amount would be put on the block, then two men would stand opposite each other across the block with broad axes also called squaring axes and start chopping, after a short period they would shift a quarter of a circle. The flesh would then be cut cross ways. This would go on until chopped fine enough. Meat was always cut smaller than pork. When cutting up was finished the pork was put on a table and flattened evenly then the meat would be put on top and spread as evenly as possible. The general guide was one finger deep, coarse salt would be spread over the whole area as evenly as possible. The reason for the meat covering the pork was it was

possible to determine how much salt was needed. A conference would be held by those assembled to decide was there enough salt put on. In later years all this was weighed and if I remember rightly 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs of salt would be added to every 100lb of flesh.

Several knobs of garlic were crushed by hammer and put in a piece of calico, this was soaked in wine or vinegar. This juice was sprinkled over the mixture, pepper was also spread over the lot and then the whole would be thoroughly mixed by hand.

The skins or gut to put this mixture in was got from the slaughter yard at Woodburn, 2 miles on the Pacific Highway south of Woodburn. The skins would be taken home, and all the fat was scraped off first. The skins would be turned inside out and this was an important job as they had a slimy mixture on them and this had to be removed. The skins would then be put away in a tub and covered with salt until needed. The skins would be soaked in water on the morning of the making of salami and turned inside out. The skins would be filled by machine and salami would be made in lengths of about twelve to fourteen inches long. The old-time steel table fork which had prongs as sharp as needles were used to puncture the skin to release any air which may have been trapped inside. If the air was left inside this would cause the salami to go mouldy. Sausages would be tied in pairs and put over a pole and smoked for several nights. Then they were hung in a cool room. Sausages would be fried in slices for about four weeks then most of us would eat them raw. Under conditions which existed in the early days regarding cooling conditions these salamis would still be good to eat in a raw state for about four or five months after manufacture. Another type of sausage was made from all the sinewy pork and meat mixed with chopped up pig skins.

These were called boilers and boiled for three or four hours. Cabbages cooked in this water were delicious.

PELLAGRA – THE SCOURGE AND SHAME OF ITALY



THE MAIZE PLANT.

Often overlooked as one of the reasons why the Italians of Veneto fled the region in the 1880s, is the deadly disease of pellagra which was on the rise from 1870 to 1880. In 1881 in Italy there were 104,000 cases of pellagra, of which 55,000 were in the Veneto Region alone. There's a reason for the over-representation of this disease in the north. It wasn't related to climate or genetics, poverty or poor hygiene but to diet.

Maize (corn) arrived in Italy from South America about five hundred years ago (1495). The crop thrived and slowly became the major crop of the north. By 1846, 53.6% of Veneto farmland was being used to grow maize, and the proportion increased in the following years (70% in 1880). It was an easy crop to grow and seemed to be the answer to rising malnutrition among the peasants. Over time cereal crops took over more and more land, replacing vineyards, olive trees and chicken farming, resulting in diets that were very low in meat and dairy products. Before maize took over, Italy's northern farm workers ate broad beans with wheat, spelt, millet, rye, barley and buckwheat. Afterwards, wheat shortages and the accompanying rise in prices forced farmers to consume more of the new cereal until finally they were eating nothing else.

What did pellagra look like?

Every year, as spring began, farm workers would notice a round, dark red, itchy spot on the back of the hand that gradually faded and disappeared, leaving a patch of gleaming skin. The following year, when the fine weather returned, the patch was larger and the pigmentation darker. These

marks then spread to the legs and feet, while the hand skin scaled off and the small fissures became lesions. The disorder then spread to the mouth: gums bled, teeth went black, broke, and fell out. The victim weakened, suffered nausea, diarrhea and lost their appetite. They grew delirious, suffered serious mental deterioration and death ensued. It was a long, slow, debilitating disease sometimes lingering for many years.

Who did it affect?

It was women who suffered disproportionately. Women worked as farm workers alongside their husbands often working longer hours. Women worked during their pregnancies, and while breastfeeding, when their nutritional needs – notably for niacin – were much greater than those of men. They were generally the last to eat at meal time and any protein or other vegetable components of the meal were consumed by their husbands or children leaving them invariably to consume what remained - polenta. The disease was most common among the 25-45 age group.

What caused the disease?

One key step used by the South American Maya and Aztecs to treat cornmeal before they consumed it had been overlooked. In its traditional use it was first soaked in an alkaline (lime) solution which unlocked an element vital in the human diet. This was niacin or vitamin B3. In Veneto this traditional practice was absent and the resulting vitamin deficiency had a disastrous effect. Only towards the end of the twentieth century when the area of land committed to corn began to decline and a more varied diet returned, did pellagra begin to disappear, but it was not until 1937 that niacin or vitamin B3 whose deficiency causes pellagra, was identified.

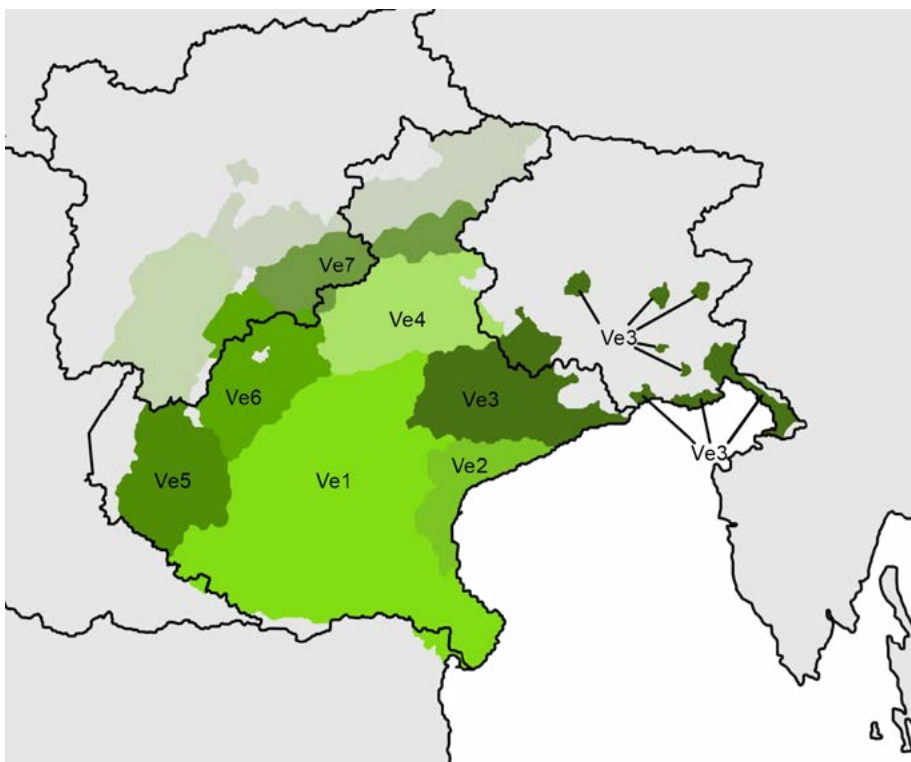
The further south you traveled on the Italian Peninsular the less prevalent pellagra became. Why? The staple diet of the population south of the Po River was wheat in the form of bread and pasta. You won't find pasta in the traditional diet of Veneto, you will instead be eating polenta made from cornmeal.

Steve Capelin

THE VENETIAN LANGUAGE AND ITS IDIOSYNCRASIES

Did you know that the Venetian alphabet has only twenty-one letters. The letters J, K, W, X, and Y are not included and are only used for “borrowed” words such as brand names. It also includes a few letters and sounds that don't exist in the English alphabet e.g. ç (pronounced ‘th’) and Ł(ł) (pronounced as a weak, almost silent ‘l’). When I visited Italy I was taken aback when people pronounced my Capelin family name using the silent ł. ‘Cap-el-in’ became ‘Cap-e-in’. Family names ending with a consonant (usually “n”) are typical of Veneto e.g. Perin, Capelin, Brican, Benetton, Zanin etc.

It took me five years to find my grandfather's birthplace due to my ignorance of the Venetian language. His death certificate listed his place of birth as Girran. A Google search and scouring of maps failed to reveal any such place. Years later I took up the quest again. I searched for any names in the area that sounded similar and landed on two possibilities: Gaarine in the Treviso Province (Veneto) and Ghirano close by in the Pordenone Province (Friuli). Months of dead ends and frustration eventually revealed that Ghirano in Venetian is spelt Ghirà. Girran/Ghiran? It fitted and was confirmed when documentation emerged which showed that his daughter, Marietta, had been born in that village. Problem solved. Except this contradicted my belief that my grandfather, Lorenzo Perin/Capelin was Venetian. He actually lived in Friuli. I then found that others from the expedition were also Friulians – Giuseppe Martinuzzi and his wife Luigia for example. But if they were Friulian what language did they speak and how did they communicate with their Venetian neighbours?



Dialects of Veneto. Ve3/Ve4 = Treviso Province (trevisàn dialect)

Veneto v Friuli

The majority of the Italians on the Marquis de Rays expedition were from the Treviso Province in the Veneto Region – from villages including Orsago, Cordignano, Codogne, Fontanelle, Conegliano, Albina etc. They all spoke the Trevisan (trevisàn) dialect. Others came from the villages of Sacile, Brugnera, Ghirano (Ghiràn), Fontanafredda and Cavolano in Pordenone Province in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia Region. Did they speak the same language? Well, yes. It turns out that language doesn't have any regard for borders. On both sides of the Veneto-Friuli border the common language was trevisàn. A map of the dialects of eastern Veneto shows that the trevisàn dialect dominated and pushed over the border into the Pordenone Province. In fact, their identity was so strongly tied to their immediate comune (municipality) and local dialect that they may not even have identified as Italian (this was only fifteen years after Veneto joined the newly created state of Italy).

Steve Capelin

SIR HENRY PARKES - FATHER OF FEDERATION AND FRIEND TO NEW ITALY

Below is my account of the life of **Sir Henry Parkes** - acknowledging his influence on the lives of the survivors of the Marquis de Ray's expedition and all Australians. It is difficult to be brief about the life of such a prominent person - who we at New Italy and in Australia at large should hold in high regard.

Born into a tenant farming family in Warwickshire, England in 1815 (the year of Waterloo), his childhood was one of difficulty and at times destitution. His family struggled as the Industrial Revolution effected the rural workforce and endured a poor economy.

With a very limited formal education his early employment was in a variety of labouring jobs before he gained an ivory-turning apprenticeship.

Henry married at age 21. He made efforts to improve his situation by taking an active interest in political affairs including the Chartist movement. Becoming disillusioned with opportunities in England, he decided to emigrate to Australia as a bounty migrant.

Arriving in Sydney at age 24 in 1839 he had a variety of labouring jobs before establishing a business as an ivory-turner and fancy goods importer. This business later failed.

Never far from politics, Henry displayed his natural journalistic talents (which were extraordinary considering his poor formal education) in a newspaper, *The Empire*, which he founded in 1848. He also wrote poetry and prose.

After an involved period of political activism, he was first elected to parliament on 1856. A visionary but practical politician, a powerful orator and possessing a strong work ethic, he campaigned for universal suffrage, the abolition of convict transportation, free trade, railway construction, social justice, improved health facilities, public libraries, and a National Art Gallery. He was responsible for the Public Schools act of 1866 which provided free education for all.

He was Premier of NSW five times between 1872 and 1892. His administrations were practical, progressive and within budget. Well and rightly known as the '*Father of Federation*', Henry made his first public advocacy for a federation of the then disunited Australian colonies in 1867. His '*Tenterfield speech*' in which he advocated for a united Commonwealth of Australia was delivered on October 24th 1889. This speech is notable in that it was the first appeal to the general public to unite on matters of defense, trade and immigration.

"*One people, one destiny*" and "*what the Americans have done by war we can achieve by peace*" became his catch cries as he went on to deliver the same speech 15 times over 9 months.

His appeal led to a 1890 Melbourne conference where they drafted the federated constitution. Understandably Henry is now regarded as one of the most influential figures in Australian history. Sir Henry Parkes died in poverty in 1895 and is buried at Falconbridge.

Now where do the destitute survivors of the Marquis de Ray's expedition fit into the extraordinary political story of Sir Henry Parkes.

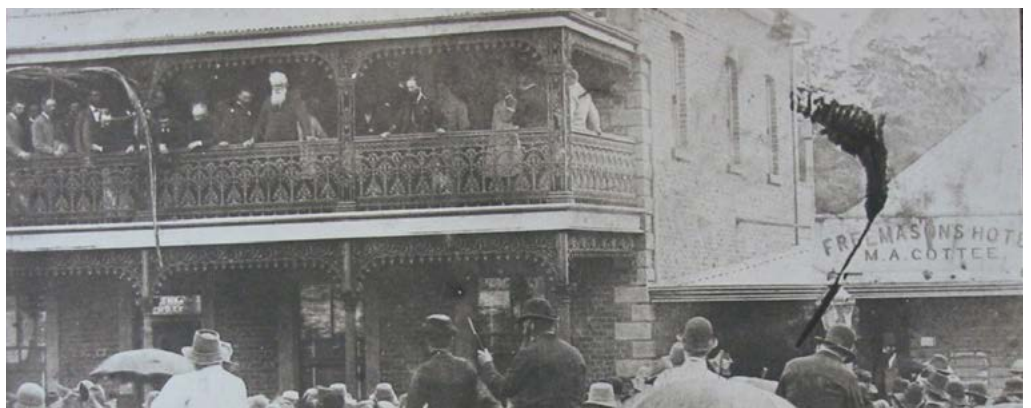
In 1880, passing ships and returning missionaries had alerted the government to the existence and plight of the Marquis de Ray's Expedition personnel in New Ireland. However, this news was infrequent. Meanwhile the New Ireland site was abandoned by the expeditioners and a way was made to Australia on '*The India*'. However mechanical issues forced the diversion of the stricken ship to the French settlement of Noumea in New Caledonia. From here the destitute people sent a settlement request to Sydney.

Parkes acted quickly and granted permission under the category of "shipwrecked mariners". Hence they arrived in Sydney on 7 April 1881 on a substitute vessel the '*James Patterson*'. Here Parkes met the destitute people and set up an inquiry to investigate their condition and prospects. Meanwhile he arranged accommodation and provided necessary assistance.

His positive settlement decision was somewhat against the prevailing policy of preferring British Isles settlers. Bearing this in mind he used the inquiry findings to justify his decision, that these people had a strong rural background and a firm resolve to succeed in Australia. To allay fears that the broader community may have had, Parkes advised the Italians of what was expected of them in return for Australian residency. These expectations were that although food and shelter would be provided for a short time they then must separate into family groups and work in various locations for at least one year. Then they may regroup if so desired. This arrangement also had a strong cultural assimilation aspect. This plan appears to have worked well. After one to two years most (but certainly not all) banded together to form the New Italy settlement. Now that's another story...

For his efforts to first rescue and then assist the expedition's survivors, Sir Henry Parkes was awarded a knighthood by King Umberto I of Italy.

John Barnes



Left to right: Sir Henry Parkes (State Library of NSW); Henry Parkes campaigning in Lismore, 1883.

SPINAZE PARK TULLERA: A FAMILY LEGACY

Recently the Lismore City Council completed extensive renovations to Spinaze Park, Tullera, which is on Dunoon Road about 15 kilometres north west of Lismore.

Now how does this interest us? Well, it so happens that the land for **Spinaze Park** was donated to community use by a Marquis de Rays expedition survivor, **Antonio (Tony) Spinaze** in the mid 1920s.

Initial development was for a community hall completed in 1928. This was later extended to include a tennis court, picnic areas and a cricket field.



Above: Spinaze family representatives, Kathy Bush and Monica Spinaze, Lismore City Council Open Spaces Officer, Anton Nguyen and Tullera Hall President, Carl Cadonetti with interpretive signage at Spinaze Park.

Below: The upgraded Spinaze Park - fig trees planted by Antonio Spinaze.



NEW ITALY SCHOOL 1887



The first school building was made of slabs with battens on the cracks. Messieur Jean Le Cheminant, a French linguist who also spoke Italian, was appointed as the first teacher at the New Italy School in 1885.

Back row left to right: May Boiro, Lucy Morandini, Mary Pezzutti, Lizzie Flett, Mary Flatley, Julia Mellari, ... King, Antonio Spinaze, ... King, Antonio Roder and the Teacher (1885-90), Messieur Jean Le Cheminant

Middle row left to right: Ellen Flatley, Josie Piccoli, Mary Ann Flett, Graciento Bertoli, Dominic Antonioli, Antonio Boiro

Front row left to right: Mary Mazzer, Anina Pezzutti, Fiorina Bazzo, Mary Ann Mazzer, Jack Mazzer, George Flett, Lorenzo Roder, Mario Pezzutti, Joseph Spinaze, Peter Spinaze, Willie Thompson

from 'The New Italy School: A History' Jack Tinker

WHO WAS TONY SPINAZE?

Born into a farming family in Codogne, Italy in 1877, he along with other family members survived the rigours of the Marquis de Ray's expedition and finally as a 4 year old arrived in Sydney in 1881.

After an assimilation period in Sydney the family joined other expedition members and settled at New Italy in 1883. The families early years at New Italy were in a bark hut that gradually became a little more comfortable.

Along with all the settlement's children, Tony was a foundation student of the school when it opened in September 1885 (see photo below). This was his formal introduction to the English language. His classroom education ended in Grade 6 in 1889 (or 1890) aged 13.

At the age of 16, his father died aged 49 (effectively of an expedition contracted illness) and he became the "father" of the other 7 children. Tony's work life started on the family farm and later he worked on various other farms in the Lower Richmond Valley - including the extensive Boland property near Coraki. In the early 1900's he also worked on the construction of St. Carthage's Cathedral in Lismore.

In 1911 Tony married Fiorina Bazzo (another expedition descendant) at the New Italy Catholic Church. In 1921 they bought a property at Tullera and proceeded to develop it into a showpiece of productivity. Here he and Fiorina also cared for his widowed mother until she died at age 89 in 1934.

Innovative, resourceful and multi-skilled, he developed a stud Jersey herd and accompanying piggery. Later a banana plantation and many other farms were added to his domain.

Ably supported by Fiorina and later by his growing family, his successful farming methods attracted the attention of the Department of Agriculture and consequently the Tullera property was cited as a *how to* example for domestic and foreign students. Always interested in "things rural" he became locally well-known and respected for his enterprise and success. Tony died at his Tullera home at the age of 78 in 1956 - a fine example of integration into and contribution to Australia.



Antonio and Fiorina (née Bazzo) married at New Italy 1911.

John Barnes

This article outlines the life of just one of the first generation survivors of the Marquis de Rays' expedition. If you would like to contribute an article about any other expedition survivors, we would love to hear from you.

Contact museums@newitaly.org.au

CONEGLIANO: AN IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP WITH LISMORE

Lismore City Council was approached by citizens **Peter and Joan Bortolin** to establish a formal 'friendship' relationship with Conegliano in the Veneto north-east Italy since the late 1970s. Council supported the efforts of a group of its citizens to open negotiations with regional cities of Conegliano followed by expressions of interest from the nearby city of Vittorio Veneto. Immigrants from these centres and other well-established agricultural wine growing towns and villages were part of the New Italy settlement established near Woodburn in the 1880s.

In 1989 **Mayor Fredricks** wrote *"My Council has been advised that the whole of the Lismore Italian Community of approximately 400 families, 200 of which emanate from Northern Italy, would welcome moves to establish a Sister City link with a city or town in Italy close to their place of origin, and it has therefore resolved that the necessary formal approach be made to Conegliano"*.

Ultimately it was formalized by **Mayor Alderman Harold Fredricks** in 1991 after documents expressing interest from all parties.

Mayor of Conegliano, Flavio Silvestrin wrote in 1989 *"I am in favour of any type of rapport of cooperation between our centres and at an exchange of communications, of ideas, information of cultural, social and commercial character between the citizens of Lismore and those of Conegliano. We have so much in common because numerous are the families that live in our cities, whose ancestors migrated from the Veneto many years ago and continue to maintain numerous contacts with the local relatives"*.

Its friendship, trust and esteem towards the city of Lismore, where numerous families of Italian origin now reside and work, many of whom are from the region of Conegliano. The city of Conegliano would like to collaborate and exchange ideas and information of a cultural, social and commercial nature, between the citizens of Lismore and those of Conegliano, as a testimony of old ties that unite the two cities, although so far apart.

A video filmed in the Lismore district was dubbed into Italian to promote the northern rivers area to Italian partner cities. Meanwhile, **Conegliano** and **Vittorio Veneto** is steeped in history and proud of its time-honoured traditions and cultural heritage. It is the place where the world-famous Prosecco wine is produced. These hills yield 35,000,000 kilos of grapes annually from which 20,000,000 bottles of sparkling wine are made.

Subsequent to the formalisation many residents from Lismore have visited the Comunes, met Mayors and enjoyed the hospitality of locals to help promote grassroots connections to build the 'friendship' relationship.

Dr Ros Derrett OAM

Images top to bottom: Peter and Joan Bortolin with dignitaries in Conegliano; a map from the New Italy Museum showing the towns and villages from where the 1880s New Italy settlers came, including Conegliano and Vittorio Veneto; Dr Ros Derrett gifts 'The Power of the Land - a social history of the Lismore Italians' by Lesley Jenkins to the Mayor of Conegliano; Conegliano with views across the town towards the farming land beyond by Peter Derrett.



WHAT IS COMITES?

Com.It.Es NSW (Comitato degli Italiani all'Estero, or Committee of Italians Abroad) is an official elected committee that protects the rights, interests, and cultural integration of Italian citizens in New South Wales. Created by Italian law and linked to the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it is made up of 12 Italian community members chosen by registered voters. Every five years about 48,000 Italian citizens living in NSW directly vote for individuals from the local community to fill the 12 available seats. The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially calls and oversees these elections.

COMITES NSW works alongside the Italian Consulate of Sydney to support Italian citizens, their social and cultural needs, organize community events, and promote social, linguistic, and cultural initiatives.

Michele (Mike) Grigoletti, is the Chair of 'Immigration, Sport and Regional Australia', a sub-committee for COMITES NSW. Since 2018, Mike has attended many events at New Italy Museum, which he considers an important and beautiful piece of living history. *"The Museum not only honors early Italian pioneers, but it also brings a sense of "home" to the many travelers in Australia, from working-holiday makers to students, from tourists to new Australians. It is a rare gem that make every Italian living in Australia very proud. Congratulations to all of the New Italy volunteers for the hard work, which I hope the Italian Government can soon recognize."*

NIMI is proud to have Mike as an honorary member of the current committee. We value the important work he does at COMITES NSW, his insights into progressing various cultural initiatives between Italy and Australia and his ongoing friendship with Historic New Italy and the Northern Rivers Italian Community.



Left: COMITES has its 2024 AGM in the New Italy Hall; Mike meets with New Italy Museum volunteers in the New Italy Museum

Top: Mike joins us at 2019 New Italy Anniversary Day celebrations; advising young Italians travellers at New Italy; Mike joins Australia Day celebrations in Conegliano.



THE COURAGE OF THE CONTADINI

STORY BY LINCOLN BERTOLI

Australia's earliest Italian immigrants were victims of a fraudulent colonisation scheme in the South Pacific.

FEBRUARY 2022, when widespread flooding devastated northern New South Wales, stranded travellers sought sanctuary in the New Italy mansion and campground in Richmond Valley. Here, they took shelter from what would become the region's worst natural disaster on record – fitting, given New Italy's remarkable but often-overlooked history as a bastion of hope for the hopeless.

Australia was a remote, uncharted, of a thousand islands and bays, where the survivors were sent to settle as alone as promised at La Nouvelle France. They'd been floored by a French nobleman who'd promised a better life as a new colony in the South Pacific. But the advertised 'colony' didn't exist, and many perished soon after arrival. Some survivors, however, went on to settle in Australia, arriving in Sydney Harbour on 7 April 1801.

Among the survivors were also then 12-year-old great-grandfather Bonifazio 'Bonni' Bonini, his mother Bruna, and her brother, a 10-year-old boy, Giovanni and Regina. They'd been sold into slavery by their father, a Sicilian, to a man from the Kingdom of Italy they thought of themselves through hard work and determination. Earlier this year I joined 240 people at Newbury to commemorate the 145th anniversary of their arrival. Many like me, were descendants of the original settlers.

My great-grandfather, Bonifazio, was from the small town of Arak-Visconti in Sicily. He was a fisherman, and he'd been sold to a man from the Kingdom of Sicily in Northern Italy, where they'd ended up a living as farmers and sheepkeepers – known colloquially as *contadini*.

(*quartieri di countrymen*) – around the municipalities of Treviso and Pordenone. They lived, by all accounts, close to the poverty line. The annexation of Veneto to the newly created Kingdom of Italy in 1866 added to domestic hardships through increased taxation as well as the inherent loss of proud Venetian independence, which included their own language and customs.

CHARLES MARIE BONAVENTURE de Bril – better known as Marquis de Rays – was born on 2 January 1832 at Quimper, his family estate in Finistère, Brittany. Despite inhering his father's title as a child, the political and social upheaval of the French Revolution had deprived the young de Rays of the wealth and privileges of his ancestors. Although not required, and now largely obsolete, manorings once occupied an enviable position in European peerage, tainted with protecting national borders.

In 1877, after a number of failed commercial ventures in North America, Indochina and Africa – including a scheme to colonise parts of Madagascar – the French chateaufort turned his attention to the South Pacific, parts of which hadn't been colonised by European powers.



After surviving the horrors of the 'columb' shelter used by Margarete de Haas followed, Italian families arrived in NSW. Centaurus and Antonio's (Hendri) (left) stand in front of their store just in the early days of the New Italy settlement. Elvira (far left) - pictured below with his wife, Mary, and children Philomena (far back), Angela (far right), Elizabeth (far front) and Dorothy Johanne - lived in New Italy for 34 years.

Next, de Ruys began advertising a new 'kingdom' in the South Pacific, which he named La Nouvelle France. The first colony of Port Bonnet was the Kingdom's first (and only) 'settlement'. It was on the island of New Ireland in the Bismark Archipelago, its present-day Papua New Guinea.

The advertisements described La Nouvelle France as a place where "contagious diseases were unknown" and the land was "of easy cultivation...possessing a really prodigious fertility". De Rays used recruiting agents to sell the dream of island living across Italy, France, Germany and Belgium.

— subscribers to the scheme could purchase a four-room house on a 20-acre plot of land. The fee also covered transport to the Peet Breton colony and six months of provisions. Those who couldn't afford to pay up-front could give five years of service to the colony to qualify for home ownership. Subscription fees ranged from 8000 francs for families, 250 francs for single men and women, and 125 francs for child.

Some 300 people were recruited as colonists. Three ships transported them to the fictitious colony between 1879 and 1881, despite attempts by various European governments to prevent them from leaving.

The first ship, the *N.S. Chantier* (see left Flushing (Vlaanderen), Holland on 14 September 1879), departing under the cover of darkness with 82 passengers, provisions and agricultural supplies. It reached New Ireland in January 1880. The small weather *Goed* soon followed, setting sail from Barcelona in March ►

Subscribers to the Australian Geographic will have been pleasantly surprised by this well-written family-based version of the New Italy story. New Italy descendant, Lincoln Bertoli, was commissioned by Australian Geographic to write this article that he sees as the warm up towards a book. Attendees at 2026 Anniversary Day may have met Lincoln in the crowd.

While we look forward to his book, enjoy the on-line version of the article: <https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/history-culture/2026/07/the-courage-of-the-contadini/>



New Italy settlers pool with becca balls (left) during a community sports day, since 1953. Back sport: G-R Sean Barick, Angela Barick, Brian Barick. Front row: G-R Edoardo Fazio, Vito Fazio and John Razolin.

Settlers made wine
Oakland, often from long-gone vines
farmed in a hands-on
wooden barrels. Antonio
control and Angela Pozzo
showed in front of their wine
store in the city.

There were no paved roads, schools or churches, just impenetrable rainforest and mountainous coastline.



All were oblivious to the horrors that lay ahead.

HISTORIAN DR. JO KOLAS, an adjunct fellow at Southern Cross University, has spent 15 years researching the La Nouvelle France scheme. She says the hardship suffered by the voyagers were almost beyond belief. "Rotting food, overworking, illness, death and the increasing tropic heat made the trip incredibly difficult," she says. "Ten of the Italians died on this first leg of the *Isola's* voyage before they even reached their destination." When they reached Port Houton on 14 October 1980 after three months at sea, they didn't find driving coils. There were no paved roads, schools or churches, just impenetrable eucalypt, mountainous terrain and a few roughly built huts dotting the coastline.

Despite the area's unsuitability for settlement, the Italians busily set to work, clearing what land they could for cropping, constructing shelters and caring for the sick. Fresh water was plentiful, but tropical diseases and inadequate food supplies took their toll. More than 20 *malindi* perished in the four months

After failing to secure mine supplies, and threatened by starvation, the surviving colonists boarded the *Isabella* 20 February 1891 and put La Nouvelle France to the test, embarking on a miserable life-or-death voyage to Nicaragua, the French colony of New Caledonia.



Simon Pozzetti (above), a descendant of the original settlers, explains the New Italy Museum. Traditional Italian gelato (top right) was served during the Anniversary Day celebrations.

From 1852 to the early 1900s some 40 families, including my own, took up holdings for a reported £1 an acre, payable over 20 years. The settlement was initially called *La Cella Venetia* (Venetian Cell). Returns were less initially, but by 1886 the settlement had become a thriving agricultural community and changed its name to 'New Italy'. A school was built and the settlers assimilated into Aussie life. *From Immigrant to Aussie!*

He toiled on his 100-acre plot, cutting timber, building slab and shingle homes, digging wells, and growing fruit and vegetables. He carved bocce balls from the gnarled roots

on Sundays. Winemaking was popular in the community. Some even ventured into sericulture, producing silk that was sold at trade fairs in Chicago and Milan. But as time moved on, so too did many of the original settlers, including Bert, who in 1916 bought a dairy farm on the northern side of the Richmond River. Giuseppe Perodi, who began the university

Their stories are now remembered in the New Italy Museum. Since opening its doors in 1990, volunteers such as more-trained-museum president Gail Williams have brought this history to life, acknowledging the courage and tenacity

Shop is in a replica of Luigi Antoniolli's original mudbrick wine shop. Plans are underway to upgrade the pavilion that was originally donated by the Italian government following the World Expo '88 in Brisbane.

"Marking the anniversary is important because it allows the descendants to strengthen their community and cultural bonds by celebrating their heritage together," Gail told me after this year's Anniversary Day celebrations. "My cancer once carried me across continents, and now the world comes to me through the door of Casa Vecchia. I'm transported to another country without even leaving the coasters, and I get to enjoy it every time I come to work."

SILK AND LACE AT NEW ITALY

Producing silk is an important chapter in the New Italy settlement's story. **Sue Johnson**, an accomplished lacemaker, visited the New Italy Museum in August 2026 and admired the beautiful lace we have on display. An artisan with much experience working overseas and in Australia, she appreciated the quality of our examples. She has offered assistance in understanding the making techniques and is curious about the early lacemakers of New Italy. Many items on display are

various types of crochet but she has identified other methods of lacemaking as well. We are hoping to use this information to better caption items on display.

The New Italy Museums group is keen to follow Sue's enquiry about our heritage fabrics display. Would any of the descendants of the New Italy families have any lace-making equipment, photos or stories from New Italy? **Contact:** museums@newitaly.org.au



NIMI PRESIDENTS ROLL OF HONOUR

At NIMI we value our volunteers who make things happen through a shared generosity, knowledge and commitment. Let's spare a moment of appreciation for those who have put their hand up to head the NIMI committee since its inception. To the right is a list of NIMI's past presidents - we could see this as the beginnings of a roll of honour.

In so many ways they have carried the greatest load. They have shared a deep appreciation of the micro and macro details across the organisation, site infrastructure, managing various issues, changes, events, projects, committee members - all in different capacities.

While working at various NIMI projects, I have worked alongside **Americo Melchior** (a member of the NR Italian community), **John Barnes** (a New Italy descendant) and **Gail Williams** (a New Italy resident)- each with very different skills and styles of leadership but all with their heart in the right place. I hold each in high regard.

Lets not forget the ones who came before them. **Silvano Gava**, **Nicola Volpato**, **Floriano Volpato** and **Spencer Spinaze**. They have all provided an extraordinary foundation on which to build.

Thank you all!

Leonie Lane

NIMI PAST PRESIDENTS

Spencer Spinaze	1980 ~ 1989
Floriano Volpato	1989 ~ 2000 (March)
Nicola Volpato	2000 (April) ~ 2005
Americo Melchior	2006 ~ 2007
Silvano Gava	2008 ~ 2009
Americo Melchior	2009 ~ 2011
John Barnes	2012 ~ 2020
Gail Williams	2021 ~ now

FRIENDS OF NEW ITALY CYNTHIA McKEOUGH & LEONE STIBBARD

The upgrade of the Italian Pavilion displays (2023 and ongoing) and the New Italy Museum (2016-2019), has been largely carried forward by volunteers who bring generosity, life skills, community knowledge and a sense of humour to our many days of planning and installation.

Cynthia McKeough (left) and **Leone Stibbard** (right) are two who have brought a wonderful commitment to Historic New Italy for over 15 years. They both share strong family connections to the New Italy story and continue to live in the area. Cynthia and Leone met at Woodburn Public School and have been friends ever since. Their husbands became great mates through cane harvesting and farming.

Cynthia, a descendant of the **Antoniolli** and **Monti** families,* was raised at Broadwater and moved to Kilgin after she married Terry. She again lives at Broadwater where the McKeough's continue to farm. Cynthia has assisted NIMI in so many different ways: donating many treasured objects and stories from the Monti and Antoniolli families as well as a knowledge of a life spent in the community and on the land. This informs the skilled making of 'props' - bananas, sugar cane, baccalá, bollards, a lemon tree, tying fishing line and more! And she plays piano accordion!!

Leone is a descendant of the **Rosolen** family*. Her grandfather was Pietro Rosolen, at 14 years old, a survivor of the Marquis de Rays voyage. Leone lives locally and farms ti tree at Dungurubba with her husband, John. Leone has brought very fine quilt-making skills, a love of heritage fabrics and farming knowledge to the diverse spaces of the museum and the pavilion. She is an excellent meeter-and-greeter in the Pavilion engaging local, national and international visitors.

What do they like about volunteering at New Italy? *'We have fun! Love the companionship, the making of 'props' for display, meeting visitors and watching it all come together.'*

* Visit the **New Italy Museum** for stories of these families.



Leonie Lane

PROJECT UPDATES

THE ITALIAN PAVILION

Edging towards reopening, we have completed many tasks.

The two entrances - Piazza and Tower - have almost been completed. Park bench and fresh window murals installed next to the Piazza entrance. Signage on the Tower facing the Highway has been ordered and will be installed soon.

We are building towards the 'Italian Businesses' display:

- currently expanding on a draft map of Italian run businesses in Lismore 1920s - 1980s. (If you or your family ran such a business please contact me - make sure you are on the map!)
- collecting tools of trade, training books, receipts, dockets, press ads and business cards
- refurbishing an illuminated sign for 'Summerland Travel Centre' (see below).

'The Making Historic New Italy' audio visual display is in place and working.

The Departure Arrivals Wharf - developing 'bollards' and ropes to be added to sea chest displays.

Italian Kitchen Gardens has 'a lemon tree', 'grapes' and a developing garden.

Floating tools, objects and props have been fastened and tied down. Thanks Mick Melino and John Sauer!

Vinyl boxes for several displays are being fabricated.

Heritage maps of Italy have been framed, secured and installed.

STILL TO DO...

We need to install 3 displays in the ceiling of the Pavilion which will require experienced builders. Watch this space...

Work on 'Clubs' and 'Festivals' displays and more - more fun and games...

We have had some unexpected delays but hope to have a safe and open Pavilion soon. Thank you for your patience!

If you would like to help us, you would be very welcome!

Contact Leonie - museums@newitaly.org.au



DOG PARK ADDITIONS

The off-leash dog park benches - Australian-made and made of 100% recycled plastic - are now in place! Visitors to Historic New Italy can now sit in comfort, sipping on a cuppa from the Café while watching their four-legged friends burn some pent-up energy in our fully-fenced dog exercise areas.

The installation of two benches was made possible with support from **Richmond Valley Council's Community Financial Assistance Program**. A big thanks to **Anna Lagerstedt**, who applied for the funding and oversaw the project from planning to installation.



TOILET BLOCK UPGRADE

A massive thank you to all who have donated to our toilet upgrade fund so far! We're almost at \$20,000! Fund-raising continues and we hope to reach our target.

So please consider a donation during your next visit to Historic New Italy.

Many thanks for your support in advance!





In Loving Memory of
Ann Gava
(Nee McKinnon)

13 March 1938 - 26 April 2026

Late of Goonellabah, formerly of Casino.
Passed away peacefully surrounded by loved ones
on Sunday 26th April.

Aged 88 years.

Dearly loved wife of Sil (decd).

Loved mother and mother-in-law of Lisa & Roy.

Jeanne & Mike, and Anthony & Gina.

Cherished grandmother of Simon & Ali, Wade & Jenny,
and Liam & Layla.

Loving great-grandmother of Luca, and Elodie.

Loved sister of Isobel, Brian, Kevin, Mary, Tim, and Kathy.

Loving aunt to her nieces and nephews.

Cherished friend of Lyn & David Mudford.

'A special thanks to the staff at Caroonia Jurnman'



Ann Gava is remembered as a loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, as well as someone who had a great commitment to her community.

At New Italy she was NIMI Secretary for several years while her husband Sil Gava was President of NIMI. Ann loved New Italy immensely, enjoying all of the big celebrations held over the years of her involvement and beyond. She assisted with the planning, cooking and balanced the books at the end of the day. Sil and Ann will be fondly remembered as a feature on the piazza dance floor at New Italy events.



In Loving Memory of
Dr Christine Jillian
Pezzutti (nee Spence)
"Chris"

1st November 1948 to 27th June 2026

Passed away suddenly at her home in Richmond Hill (Lismore)
aged 77.

Adored mother and mother-in-law to Michael & Wendy, Erica,
James & Rebecca and Gretta & John. Wife to Brian.

Cherished grandmother of Olivia, William, Elliott, Ava, Benjamin,
Alfred, George, Ella, Henry, Michael, and Sophie.

Cherished sister to Jenny and Jill and Aunt and,
great aunt to many.

Dear friend to many, a respected doctor and active community
member.

'Forever In Our Hearts'



Dr Christine Pezzutti passed away on 29 June 2026.

She grew up on the northern beaches of Sydney. She excelled at school and studied medicine at The University of Sydney.

In the late 1970s, she married Brian Pezzutti and they moved to the Northern Rivers. In addition to raising four children, working as a GP and managing Brian's anaesthetic practice, Chris was a contributor to many community, sports and political organisations.

In retirement, Chris' great passions were playing bridge and her 11 grandchildren.

Chris is remembered as a dedicated wife, mother, grandmother and dear friend to many.



VALARIE FAY BATTISTUZZI
(Nee CROOK)

24.09.1939 ~ 18.08.2026

Passed away peacefully surrounded by her loving family
at Alstonville. Much loved wife of Cecil. Adored mother of
Judith, Graeme, Margaret (dec.), Marea, Neville, Stephen and
their partners. Cherished Nan of her 8 grandchildren and
9 great grandchildren.

Valarie 'Val' Battistuzzi had a huge love of family, friends and community. Her commitment to community was huge: Junior Farmers, Westpac Helicopter, the Clunes Anglican Church Guild and the Rural Fire Service. A skilled gardener, she ran the Clunes Veggie Stall/Nursery with her husband Cec and daughter Judith for many years.

She shared a great love for New Italy with her husband Cec and her six children. The Battistuzzi family have contributed memorabilia to the New Italy Museum and several plantings in the Park of Peace. Most recently they installed the Wedding Bower in the Park of Peace which will be dedicated in Val's honour.

NIMI extends our deepest sympathy to the Gava, Pezzutti and Battistuzzi families.

RECENT EVENTS

VOLUNTEERS DAY - THE SANDBAR, EVANS HEAD - 7 JUNE



Historic New Italy volunteers' enjoyed a celebratory lunch at the Sandbar Restaurant in Evans Head. A wonderful opportunity to appreciate our fellow volunteers and to celebrate our two wonderful retiring gardeners, Val and Kel Walker.

Left: NIMI president Gail Williams with Kel and Val Walker. Right: Back row: Photographer Peter Derrett, Leonie Lane, Steve Van Der Kleij, Gail Williams, Vicki Sheaffe, John Barnes and Jim Lagerstedt. Middle row: Ros Derrett, Vanessa Dibley, Dot Randle, Susan Creasey, Cynthia McKeough and Anna Lagerstedt. Front row: Kel and Val Walker.

2026 LISAMORE! - LISMORE SHOWGROUND - 5 JULY



Left to right: Fran and Gail did a roaring trade in the Italian Gift Shop stall; Lismore MP, Janelle Saffin with LisAmore! organiser, Julie de Nardi; Leonie Lane mapping the origins of LisAmore's Italian visitors.



Kids activities and Domenico charming the crowds.

Left to right: ComItEs NSW committee members Lisa Genovese (Vice President), Michele Grigoletti (Head of the Regional Commission and a Councillor), Historic New Italy President Gail Williams, NIMI Museum and Pavilion Curator Leonie Lane, and Matt Biviano - General Manager Club Marconi (Sydney).

POP UP STALLS ON-SITE AT HISTORIC NEW ITALY



Pop-up stalls have been proving very popular on-site at Historic New Italy. Local small artisan creative stalls have been making regular appearances near the Museum entrance and the Gift Shop.

If you would like to start your own or get more information, contact the events committee:

newitalyevents@gmail.com

UPCOMING EVENTS

2026 NIMI ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2 - 4PM

Beginning with Afternoon Tea.
We welcome new members and renewals.
We invite nominations for the committee.

A package including

- Letter to Members
- Proxy/ Nomination/ Membership Forms
- 2025 AGM Minutes
- 2026 AGM Agenda

will be sent to all current members

*

RSVP ATTENDANCE ~ CATERING NEEDS BY 3/11/2026:
museums@newitaly.org.au

SQUARE DANCING SESSIONS NEW ITALY HALL

BENEFITS OF SQUARE DANCING



From **TUESDAY 4 AUGUST 6pm-8pm!**
Led by Frances from Square Dance Lismore.
Many physical and mental health benefits and a great way
to have fun and socialise! Reserve your spot now!
Call Frances 0407 663 017



ONE MORNING A WEEK

- Water the pot plants
- Weed garden area around Pavillion & Café
- Do some light trimming as needed.

* Mileage allowance, tools, potting mix, fertiliser provided.

Contact **GAIL 0414 348 566**



LEARN ITALIAN with CLAUDIA CANTORI!

10.30am Saturdays

Venue: LISMORE LIBRARY

In the small meeting rooms for groups
of up to 6 students.

Classes for all ages:

Parents & children • Children (age 8+) • Adults
\$25/hour for a group session or \$20 with sibling/
parent discount

For class bookings or information
email cantoriclaudia@gmail.com
text 049 041 0193

https://www.villagefit.com.au/group-classes#Bookings%20Services

NEW ITALY HALL
Historic New Italy
8275 Pacific Highway, Woodburn NSW 2472

BOOKING ENQUIRIES

@ newitalyevents@gmail.com
www.newitaly.org.au
Historic New Italy



...WATCH THIS SPACE ... RE-OPENING THE ITALIAN PAVILION ... 2026...

SHOPPING AT HISTORIC NEW ITALY... CASA VECCHIA GIFT SHOP



Gift Shop volunteers - Fran Muggleton, Tina Sheehy, Susan Creasey, Ros Derrett, Vanessa Dibley, Vicki Sheaffe and co-ordinator Gail Williams. Photos by Peter Derrett and Gail Williams

Our fabulous shop volunteers are the heart and soul of our gift shop. Although our team is small, they work to make your visit a great experience through their product knowledge, friendliness and good humour. So, when you see the doors open, come on in and say 'Ciao!' Our friendly shop helpers will happily let you browse at your leisure, show off our new stock and share stories behind our merchandise. Their dedication keeps the spirit of the shop alive - and we're incredibly grateful for each and everyone of them. If we are closed - many apologies - it is due to a lack of available volunteers on that day.

Gail Williams • giftshop@newitaly.org.au • 0414 348 566

MYBELLE PANTRY



Bokashi and Bioblitz products available at MyBelle Pantry

Bokashi One and BioBlitz are now stocked at MyBelle Pantry! Bokashi One makes it easy to compost a wide range of kitchen waste, including meat and dairy, while BioBlitz harnesses beneficial bacteria and naturally produced enzymes to break down organic waste, reduce odours and support healthier, cleaner environments. Together, they're a simple, sustainable choice for your home and garden.

Michele Bertoli • masfmdcare@gmail.com • 0403 212 747

NEW ITALY GLASS ART GALLERY



Spring is here at **New Italy Glass Art Gallery!** Love abounds with an array of bees on site as well as featured in glass and print. Plenty of choices available for gifts for your nearest and dearest here at Historic New Italy! Come, visit the Glass Art Gallery and bee amazed!

Ian & Julie O'Driscoll • ianodriscoll58@gmail.com • 0414 668 223

TASTES OF NEW ITALY CAFÉ



New Italy Café is back up and running after completing much-needed renovations! The place looks great. A refreshed and more open space for visitors in front of the counter and a reworked space for the workers out the back. Come and check it out! Let us know what you think. Enjoy! Open 7 days from 7am - 4pm.

Jamie Herring • newitalycafe@gmail.com • 6682 2622

JOIN / RENEW NIMI Membership <https://www.newitaly.org.au/about-us/membership/>

CASH DONATIONS <https://www.newitaly.org.au/about-us/donation/>

NIMI is registered with ATO ~ Deductible Gift Recipient

ITEM DONATIONS <https://www.newitaly.org.au/about-us/item-donation/>

'IL GIORNALE' Summer 2026: content 19/11/2026 - museums@newitaly.org.au

STAY IN TOUCH newitaly.org.au • 8275 Pacific Highway Woodburn NSW 2472

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