



## House of Assembly

Extract from Hansard

Thursday 9 June 2016  
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### ST HILARION SOCIETY

**The Hon. A. PICCOLO ( Light )  
( 12:25 ):**

I will just add a few words in support of this motion.

I will not take too long because most of what needs to be said has been said by the member for Hartley and also the member for Ashford, and I do not wish to repeat what they have already said. There are just a few comments I would like to make as a migrant to this country, although I am not from the Calabria region. I am from the Campania region, which is further north.

Certainly my children are half-Calabrese, their mum's family being from Calabria. They enjoy the benefits of two cultures, and I will explain why I believe it is two cultures rather than just the one.

The Society of Saint Hilarion is one of many regional organisations which has an Italian heritage. I say regional because, for those people who perhaps do not know Italy that well, Italy only came together in the 1850s as a nation, and some of those differences came through when people came to Australia and other parts of the world when they migrated.

My late father used to tell me a story when I was young that when we migrated to Australia we had some neighbours who were from Calabria and, because we came from the Campania region, when they first met they did not know they were both from Italy because the dialects were so different. They found it quite challenging to communicate and it took a while for them to start to understand each other.

I am sure the member for Hartley would support what I say.

People who were born in Italy speak multiple dialects and languages. In fact, the Italians actually created a new language. It is sort of a version of English and Italian put together. It has been studied because it is actually quite a common thing around the world where, particularly for people of southern Italy, and I include my family in that, who were not well educated in their own language, often the language they knew was only spoken. We actually anglicised some Italian

words, or we italianised some Anglo words.

A cousin of mine who visited us some years ago said that my mum can actually speak three languages in one sentence, where she throws in a whole range of different words. I am sure the member for Hartley can relate to that as well, when he hears people, it is particularly older people, doing that.

I mention regional because these organisations have been very important. Often people say, 'Why do you need one for each region?' It is because each region had its own traditions, its own values, its own patron saints, its own belief systems. They considered themselves Italian, but often they would consider themselves Neapolitan or Calabrian or Sicilian first.

These regional organisations provided very important support and mechanisms for people to adjust to a new nation, to a new country. For a lot of those people who came to Australia, the first time they ever left their village, or their town or their city, would have perhaps been when they came to Australia. It would have been a huge cultural shock, from not only a lack of language but also a lack of understanding of different cultural values.

These regional organisations provided, if you like, a safe landing for a lot of people as a place which provided a bit of familiarity in a nation which was quite different. It was not

only different in terms of the climate—well, the climate is pretty close; but, in terms of physical appearance, look at the villages, look at the physical appearance of Adelaide, it is very different to Italy.

These regional organisations played an incredibly important role to provide a safe landing, but also a very important role for integration to help people grow and integrate into Australian culture. The first people who arrived were assisted, then the next generation came along and they were assisted. They played a very important role to help people integrate.

As time has moved on, these organisations have grown into areas such as aged care and other social services. The number of regional organisations which have spawned a lot of services in aged care and also other cultural things has, again, been very important.

It has enabled the growth of events and activities and festivals etc., not only for the people of that region in the broader Italian community, but for the whole Australian community. If you go to any festival or feast in South Australia, a lot of the people are from a non-Italian background and they enjoy the hospitality and enjoy the culture.

It is not only about the food, etc. that we see; it is also about the whole range of values and

beliefs, and that has also influenced Australian society. It is no secret that it was very tough for the pioneers in these organisations. They often did come up against a whole range of bureaucratic barriers, but they persisted.

We owe those early pioneers who set up these organisations for their hard work. More importantly, we thank those who have come after them for the things that they have done.

I have been to the Saint Hilarion society aged-care facility in the western suburbs on a number of occasions. In fact, I was there recently when they officially opened their wellness centre. The importance of places like wellness centres is that it is not just about providing a roof over people's heads for aged people of Italian background, but it is also making sure that they actually are able to live fulfilling lives in the autumn of their lives. It is not only about physical health. Certainly, they have a gym there which provides some physical opportunities for physical health, but also they provide opportunities for mental health and cultural health, in the sense that they enable people to do things at the centre itself or they take people on trips outside the centre to remain connected to the broader community.

That is one of the greatest fears of older people, whether they are of Italian background or

Greek background or people who are born in Australia.

They are concerned that they will become disconnected from community, they will become disconnected from family.

I know the Saint Hilarion aged-care facility has put a huge emphasis on making sure that these people remain connected to their communities, which is very important, and they have actually seen the benefit.

People's mental health has improved and their physical health has improved as well. I congratulate all the people who have been involved since day one in the society, and I also congratulate all those people who have been involved in the offshoot organisations which now provide a whole range of services and support for our community at large.

Time expired