



477 Royal Parade | Parkville
 Victoria 3052 | Australia
 Phone: (03) 9387 8922
 Fax: (03) 9387 8309
 Email: admin@mccv.org.au
 Website: www.mccv.org.au
 Editor: Dr Edwin Borg-Manché

MCCV News

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SBS slashes Maltese language radio programs in new schedule

On 30 November 2012 SBS published a new schedule for its radio network that will come into effect at the end of April 2013. Of the 68 languages covered in the current schedule, the Maltese language fared the worst with programs slashed from nine hours per week to only two hours in the new schedule, one hour on Tuesdays and the other on Fridays, both at 12 noon.

Of the twenty-two languages whose programs were reduced, Maltese was the worst hit with 7 hours less, followed by Polish 4 hours, Spanish 3 hours, and German, Turkish, Russian, Dutch, Hungarian, Khmer, Portuguese and Ukrainian 2 hours each. (*See chart on page 4*).

In April 2012 SBS conducted consultations with ethnic communities on the criteria to be applied in the review of the radio schedule. However, there was no such consultation on the application of the criteria before the publication of the new schedule on 30 November 2012. SBS failed to seek feedback from ethnic communities on a proposed new schedule, and in particular, from those communities that would be the hardest hit, providing them with an opportunity to put forward their case.

Maltese community extremely disappointed

In a Media Release published on 6 December, the Malta High Commission in Canberra confirmed that it made representations with SBS expressing the disappointment of the Maltese community in Australia upon learning that broadcasts on SBS in the Maltese language are being severely cut.

The Malta High Commission said that it pointed out that the decision seems to be based on a misinterpretation of data provided by the 2011 census,



which indicates that the number of persons of Maltese ancestry has in fact increased slightly since 2006, reaching close to 200,000 persons. The census also indicates that the 'born in Malta' population is ageing and this sector would tend to need more broadcasts in Maltese. While it is understandable that emerging large communities require more services, this should not be done at the expense of smaller yet highly significant language groups.

The Malta High Commission highlighted the fact that Maltese is one of the original seven ethnic languages that were broadcast by SBS since it went on air 35 years ago and the Maltese community has always supported SBS through thick and thin, and reducing broadcasts from 9 hours to two hours a week is not what the Maltese language deserves.

In the spirit of SBS's Charter and in the spirit of the good relations that the Maltese have always had with SBS, the Malta High Commission has appealed to SBS to reconsider increasing the Maltese language broadcasts to the level previously enjoyed.

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For MCCV comment, see *President's Column*



The President and members of the Executive Committee of the Maltese Community Council of Victoria wish you and your family a Merry and Holy Christmas and a Happy and Safe New Year

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The President's Column

The savaging of Maltese radio programs in new SBS Schedule

Starting from April next year, the Maltese language programs on SBS will be reduced from 9 to 2 hours per week. There is no doubt that this will produce a considerable degree of hardship and deprivation to the many thousands of persons who regularly listen to these programs.

The reason for this drastic change has resulted partly from the need to include a number of community languages not previously covered by SBS, so that the total number of languages covered will increase from 68 to 74. It is certainly desirable that communities who have no access to a radio program in their native tongue should be provided with some opportunity to enable them to listen to news in their own language.

However, one questions the criteria and their application for distributing the remaining number of hours among the many communities clamouring for them.

Selection Criteria

SBS summarised the final selection criteria in a media release issued on 30 November as follows:

- **Large Languages Criteria:** population of approximately 20,000 or greater
- **High Needs Languages Criteria** (using ABS 2011 Census data for languages spoken in Australia):
 - Threshold requirement - population must be greater than 1,000
 - English language proficiency (weight = 40%)
 - Recentness of arrival (weight = 30%)
 - Ageing (weight = 15%)
 - Household resources and unemployment (weight = 15%)

SBS also took into account any immediate need in the form of a significant increase in the population of a language group through Australia's Humanitarian Program.

In its communication to SBS last April, the MCCV had argued that the criteria practically ignore the needs of ethnic groups who now belong to the fast-ageing group and do not need less radio just because they are old. If anything, they need it more. The weighting for this group (originally proposed at 10%) is unjustifiable. Raising it to 15% was simply inadequate.

While these criteria may appear objective and acceptable at first sight, on closer examination it becomes apparent that they are subjective, inequitable and discriminatory.

Three broad community groupings

An analysis of the actual hours allocated to the various communities appears to show that communities broadly fall into three distinct categories:

The *first group* consists of communities with a population of speakers greater than 100,000. These include the well-established communities, particularly Italian and Greek, as well as the more recent communities, like Arabic, and also

Vietnamese, Mandarin and Chinese. All these communities have been awarded the lion's share of the programs, each bring allocated 14 hours per week.

The *second group* consists of communities with a population ranging between 50,000 and 100,000. These include communities like Macedonian, Croatian, and Polish who have been allocated between 4 and 5 hours each per week. In the case of Spanish with 117,499 speakers, the number of hours allocated is 7 hours per week.

The *third group* consists of communities with a population below 50,000. This includes Maltese, and also, Dutch, Hungarian, Portuguese and Russian. These are now allowed only 2 hours per week.

Lion's share not justified

One would question how the needs of the bigger communities justify the allocation of the lion's share of the available time on SBS radio. In effect, six communities (Italian, Greek, Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese and Vietnamese) now command over one-third (34%) of the total hours available with the other 68 communities having to divide among themselves the other two-thirds.

How can one justify the need for a handful of large communities to each have two hours of radio time every day, when so many other smaller communities have such a glaring need for radio time and are allocated only one or two hours per week? The lack of justification for such disproportionate allocation of radio time becomes more blatant when one bears in mind the fact that the large communities are very well supplied with their own ethnic newspapers, often available on a daily basis, and in some cases also a 24-hour radio station and other media facilities in their language.

Apart from the newly arrived communities, whose need is without question, it looks as if the distribution of hours by SBS has been settled almost entirely on the basis of size of the community as determined by an analysis of the 2011 Census data. Such an overwhelming reliance on census statistics to dole out hours of radio time is just untenable. The many other criteria which were meant to provide a guide for distribution of radio time have been given far less importance than should have been the case.

Social isolation

SBS does not appear to have had any real appreciation of the needs of particular smaller communities before going ahead with the publication of the new schedule. There is a special relationship between age, culture and communications that does not appear to be particularly understood by SBS. Several ageing members of the Maltese community often suffer from social isolation due to their living long distances away from their relatives and their total reliance on their native language. Due to their age bracket, older members of our community listening to Maltese programs do not have access to modern electronic means of

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The President's Column

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communication, including internet and email. For them, such a severe cut in their programs will deprive them of the one medium that keeps them connected to what is going on around them in their local community, in Australia, in Malta and in the world.

To top it all, neither of the two hours allocated to Maltese is scheduled to broadcast in the most popular current weekend timeslots. Instead they are scheduled to air at a most inconvenient time of 12 noon on Tuesdays and Fridays, when people are either at work or, in the case of the aged, are resting after a meal.

Re-allocation of air time

There are valid arguments for giving at least an hour per day to as many groups as possible. Bearing in mind the fact that the cake is limited, this can only be done by reducing the superabundance of hours for the six largest communities with more than one hour per day. This would release several hours of air time for re-allocation to those minority groups which have been given only a token number of hours weekly.

The smaller, more established communities, which include Maltese, as well as Dutch, Hungarian, Portuguese and Russian, seem to belong to a separate category. These are long-established communities with a very high rate of ageing persons who depend on their SBS language programs for connection with their mother land and for information in their own language about what is happening in Australia and in their community.

The Maltese in Australia are one of a few national groupings that seem to have very limited means of language and culture maintenance. There is only one weekly Maltese paper in Australia (*The Maltese Herald*) with limited circulation and, apart from the weekly half hour news bulletin from Malta in Maltese, there are no other programs or movies in Maltese that are televised on SBS TV. By contrast, other larger language groups are able to regularly watch not just daily news bulletins, but also programs and movies in their language, all on SBS TV.

While there are a couple of local community radio stations that broadcast a handful of programs in Maltese prepared and presented by volunteers, SBS radio has always been considered as the professional flag-bearer in this field. The quality of production has always been very high and the Australian content on SBS Radio has been given in a way that is digestible by the general Maltese community in Australia.

The MCCV had also contended that placing an emphasis on Australian-content only is contrary to the basic principle of multiculturalism, which extols the values of the background culture. It is wrong to undervalue the importance of home news. Those who listen to Maltese programs still want to keep in touch with events in the home country.

A grave injustice

I believe that a grave injustice has been done in the allocation of SBS radio programs which should be remedied without waiting for another decade or two to redress these wrongs. The reliance on census statistics to award the lion's share to the well-established, power-wielding large

communities will lead to gross inequalities that are indefensible.

A more realistic criterion would have been an assessment of the use made of radio hours by any of the communities in question. Talk-backs and radiothons have shown that some of the smaller communities, including Maltese, make far more use of the radio programs than other much larger communities. This is a better indication of need than mere numbers of speakers within a community.

Complaining to SBS

Maltese everywhere should show their displeasure and disappointment by writing and complaining to SBS and signing the petition being organised by the MCCV (see copy printed at the back of this newsletter). They should also contact their local federal and state parliamentary representative to enlist their support. We must make ourselves heard. Unfortunately, for far too long it has been assumed that Maltese will take whatever is doled out to them without any complaint, but this has to change. We, as a community, need to make a stand so that we do not lose what has been so hard to gain in the past.

SBS claims to have consulted the ethnic communities in their deliberations. Eight months ago the MCCV communicated its views to SBS, raising several issues with the then proposed criteria and emphasizing the importance of appreciating the special needs of the Maltese community. In summary, the MCCV highlighted the lack of weighting for those who are elderly, home-bound, lack computer literacy, and particularly the down-grading of the concept of multiculturalism, which emphasizes the need for connectivity with the original culture. It appears that the compelling points that the MCCV raised went totally unheeded by SBS.

The MCCV strongly urges SBS to reconsider the allocation of weekly hours to Maltese language programs in the new schedule in light of the genuine needs of the ageing members of our community and bring the allocation into line with similar well-established smaller communities increasing it to, at least, five hours of air time per week..

Prof. Maurice Cauchi

MCCV President

Contributions to MCCV News

The *MCCV News* is published by the Maltese Community Council of Victoria every two months to inform the Maltese community about activities, news and information that would be of interest to it.

Contributions should be forwarded to the Editor either by email at pro@mccv.org.au or alternatively by post to:

The Editor—*MCCV News*
Maltese Community Council of Victoria
477 Royal Parade
PARKVILLE VIC 3052

Contributions must be submitted by the following dates:

- Jan-Feb 2013 Newsletter: **Friday 1 Feb 2013**
- Mar-Apr 2013 Newsletter: **Friday 22 Mar 2013**
- May-Jun 2013 Newsletter: **Friday 31 May 2013**

SBS slashes Maltese language radio programs

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MCCV Council Meeting

The savaging of the Maltese language programs in the new schedule was discussed at length at the Council Meeting of the Maltese Community Council of Victoria held on 5 December. The Council expressed its utter disappointment with the SBS decision and felt that the Maltese community was very hard done by. It was felt that, in making the decision to severely reduce Maltese language programs, SBS failed to adequately take into account the specific needs of the ageing members of the Maltese community in Australia and relied way too heavily on census numbers.

It was also felt that SBS should have, at least, had the courtesy to alert the Maltese community leaders of the seismic shift proposed in their allocated air-time rather than to suddenly and disrespectfully hit them with a dispiriting fait accompli. This would have ensured that the Maltese community's specific radio broadcasting needs would have been truly taken into consideration.

Complaints to SBS

At the meeting the Council recommended that all those members of the Maltese community who are disappointed about, or personally affected by, the reduction in hours allocated to Maltese language programs on SBS radio to express their disappointment to the management of the SBS by sending an email or a letter to:

Mr Michael Ebeid
 CEO & Managing Director
 SBS Radio
 PO Box 294, South Melbourne 3205
 Email: michael.ebeid@sbs.com.au

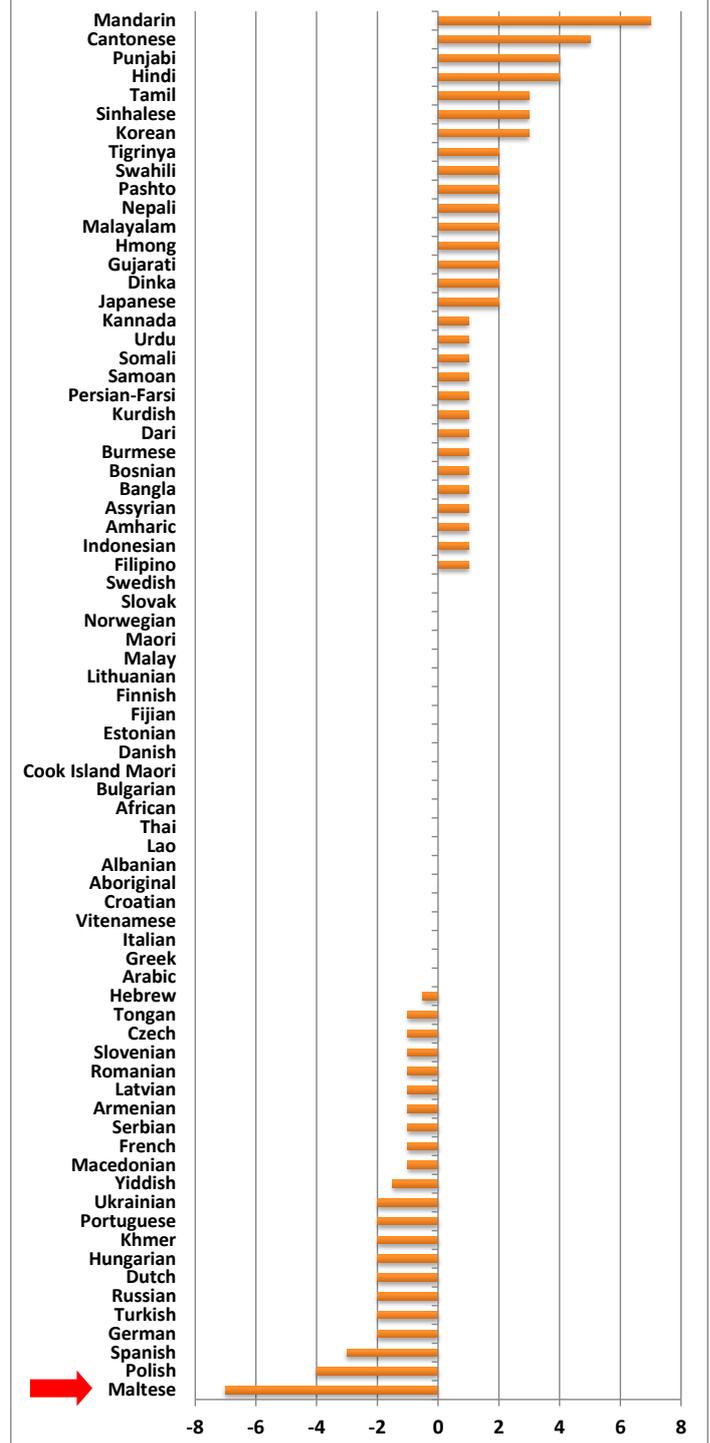
Community Action Meeting

On 13 December the MCCV held a well-attended Community Action Meeting at the Maltese Centre in Parkville to discuss what protest action the Maltese community in Victoria should take against the decision.

The meeting resolved that the Maltese community should take the following action to strongly protest against the decision to severely reduce the Maltese language program hours on SBS:

- Maltese community members are urged to sign, and encourage others to sign, the petition being organised by the MCCV, which is reproduced on the last page of this newsletter and may also be downloaded from the [MCCV website](http://www.mccv.org.au). The signed petition will be presented to the relevant Minister at a public event to be held in January 2013.
- The MCCV to engage with its community leaders in other states to co-ordinate the signing of the same petition by as many members of the Maltese community around Australia as possible.
- The MCCV to write to all federal and state MPs to enlist their support and make representations to the SBS Board and the Federal Government on behalf of the Maltese constituents in their electorate.
- Maltese associations affiliated to the MCCV and individual community members are urged to write letters and send emails to the SBS Board members and the SBS CEO protesting against the decision and emphasizing what the Maltese language programs mean to them personally.

Change in SBS Radio Broadcast Hours



- Maltese community members are urged to write letters and send emails to their local federal and state MPs and local Councillor enlisting their support and requesting them to make representations to the SBS Board and the Federal Government on their behalf.
- Maltese community members should also consider registering their protest by complaining directly to SBS about the new schedule by completing the form on the SBS website located at <https://www.tfaforms.com/237408>.
- Maltese community members with a Facebook account should post their complaints on the SBS Maltese page (search for SBS Radio Maltese in Facebook). ❌

Notes from MCCV Council Meetings

NOVEMBER 2012

The following items were discussed at the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 7 November 2012:

Maltese Cyclists in Melbourne. On Tuesday 6 November 2012, the MCCV held a reception for the Lifecycle Challenge team upon their arrival on 6 November at the Maltese Centre in Parkville, where they are staying for two nights. The *Klabb Ghannejja Maltin* based in St Albans, a western suburb of Melbourne, organised a club event to welcome the Lifecycle team and raise funds for the challenge.

Bishop Joseph Grech Fund. The Bishop Joseph Grech Memorial Scholarship 2012 of \$1,000 was awarded to Ms Rita Catania, the successful applicant for 2012. Details about next year's scholarship were sent to four Universities in Melbourne. It was suggested that the MCCV should organise a few functions during the year to keep the fund alive.

Malta Museum of Migration. Mr Joe Stafrace has kindly agreed to assist the MCCV in raising funds for the purchase of a stand-alone touch screen computer console for the Malta Migration Museum. The donor's name would be inscribed on a plaque attached to the console. The cost of one unit is around €5,000 euros (about \$6,000 AUD). These computer consoles will be available at the Museum and they will tell a virtual history of Malta. Donations towards this cause will be most appreciated. The MCCV will donate one such console to the Museum.

Publication about the late Dr Joe Abela. Mr Joe Axiaq has written a book about the late Dr Joe Abela who had written several articles for *The Maltese Herald*. This publication will be launched in the new year 2013 by the Maltese Literature Group, which sponsored it.

Council for Maltese Living Abroad. The first meeting of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad took place over two days, on 18 and 19 September 2012 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Valletta, Malta. An information session will be held on Tuesday 11 December 2012 at 7.00pm at the Maltese Centre for all members of the Maltese community in Victoria, outlining issues that were raised and discussed at the first council meeting held in Malta.

Maltese Passport and ID Card. The Malta High Commission in Canberra drew the attention of the general public and in particular the Maltese community in Australia and New Zealand to Legal Notice 308/2012 as published in the Malta Government Gazette of 28 September 2012. The new Act requires Maltese nationals returning to Malta with the intention of setting up permanent residence to apply for an ID card as soon as possible after their return to Malta. Where this is requested during the first six months of residence, applicants are granted an initial Identity Card valid for six months, which will be replaced by a new one when this period expires. The initial ID cards issued for the first six months of residence cannot be used for travel purposes. The draft Act is expected to enter into force by the end of November 2012. This measure, once in force, will address the various concerns of the Maltese living abroad about having an ID card when returning to Malta. ✠

DECEMBER 2012

The following items were discussed at the Council Meeting held on Wednesday 5 December 2012:

Maltese Language Program on SBS. The savaging of the Maltese language programs in the new schedule was discussed at length. From April 2013 Maltese programs will be slashed from eight hours per week to only two hours in the new schedule, one hour on Tuesdays and the other on Fridays from 12 noon to 1.00 pm. Council expressed its utter disappointment with the SBS decision and felt that the Maltese community was very hard done by. The MCCV is organising a special consultation action meeting with the Maltese community in Victoria which will be held on Thursday 13 December 2012 at 7.00 pm at the Maltese Centre in Parkville.

Noise Complaint to Local Council. Affiliated associations are required to provide the MCCV with copies of any letters, minutes kept in their records and other documentation about functions that they held at the Maltese Centre in Parkville over the years as proof of use of the main hall for community functions, such as, Dinner Dances. Of particular interest are records pre-1996.

Bishop Joseph Grech Fund. The Bishop Joseph Grech Memorial Scholarship 2013 will be of \$1,000. Affiliated associations are urged to promote it among their members and their families and encourage our younger generation to show some interest in Maltese culture and history and apply for the scholarship.

New MSSP Provincial Leader in Australia. Fr Mario Zammit mssp has informed the MCCV that his successor as MSSP Provincial Leader in Australia is Fr Ivano Burdian mssp parish priest at St Bernadette's Parish, North Sunshine. The MCCV congratulates Fr Burdian on his appointment and thanks Fr Zammit for his contribution as Provincial Leader.

New Australian High Commissioner. Maurice Cauchi and Edwin Borg-Manché had a courtesy meeting with the new Australian High Commissioner to Malta, H.E. Ms Jane Lambert (right) before she takes up her post in December, taking over from H.E. Ms Anne Quinane.



New Minister of Foreign Affairs. Council congratulated Dr Francis Zammit Dimech on his recent appointment as Malta's new Minister of Foreign Affairs, replacing Dr Tonio Borg, who has been appointed EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy.

OAM Award. Council congratulated Mr Mario Sammut who was recently awarded the Order of Australia Medal for services to the Maltese community. Mr Sammut is Honorary Vice-Consul of Malta for the Latrobe Valley and a popular broadcaster and DJ at Maltese community functions in Victoria. He recently announced that he will be retiring from his DJ activities at the end of this year. ✠

Deputy PM makes political career change to EU Commissioner

By Edwin Borg-Manché

The political career of former Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Dr Tonio Borg (pictured right), took an unexpected turn over a period of four weeks ending with the final confirmation of his nomination to the prestigious post of EU Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy around end November.

His nomination approval process started on 13 November with a 3-hour marathon hearing before a joint session of the European Parliament (EP) sub-committees during which Dr Borg gave an outstanding performance responding to MEPs' questions on a wide range of issues including his grasp of the Health and Consumer Policy portfolio, his experience as well as his political views and personal convictions.

A week later his nomination was approved by the EP in a secret ballot with a comfortable majority— 386 MEPs voted in favour, 281 against and 28 abstained. Dr Borg had faced an uphill battle with a widely reported critical stance adopted by some sections of the EP leading up to the hearing of 13 November.

Dr Borg's nomination was necessitated by the resignation of Mr John Dalli from the same position in mid-October. Mr Dalli was forced to resign when the EU Anti Fraud Agency (OLAF) concluded there was "unambiguous" circumstantial evidence showing he knew that his former canvasser Silvio Zammit asked for money from a Swedish tobacco company to lift an EU ban on snus – a smokeless form of tobacco which can only be sold in Sweden. However, the agency's director general, Giovanni Kessler, had said there was no "conclusive evidence" showing Mr Dalli was involved in the request by his canvasser. Both Mr Dalli and Mr Zammit have strenuously denied the allegations and any wrongdoing.

Farewell Speech

On Tuesday 27 November Dr Borg delivered his last address in Parliament and the following morning he resigned from his ministerial post in Cabinet and his seat as a MP. He had been an MP for 20 years and a minister since 2004, serving as Minister for Justice and Home Affairs and as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Dr Borg was elected in five consecutive general elections since 1992 and served as minister for 18 months between 1995-96 and for the 14 years since 1998.



In his farewell speech to the Maltese Parliament, for which his wife, children and several friends were present in the Strangers' Gallery, Foreign Minister Tonio Borg told MPs that this was an *arrivederci* and not an *addio*. He said there was no greater honour than to be elected by the people to be their representative in Parliament.

Dr Borg said he had not sought his new position as European Commissioner but had taken up the challenge at the request of the prime minister in the national interest. Over the past three weeks he felt very close to students, having, like them, to study hard, submit himself to examination and suffer the anxiety of waiting for the result.

Dr Borg recalled his maiden speech in the House after the 1992 general election, when he had said that the outcome of that election was not somebody's victory or somebody's defeat, but a celebration of democracy. It was the principles of democracy which he had always sought to project in the House during the highs and the lows. He said he never meant to hurt anyone, inside or outside the House, and he apologised to those who felt he had failed them.

Dr Borg said he was proud to have played a role for Malta to join the European Union and, over the past eight years, in its integration in the Union and the Schengen zone, ensuring that Malta was able to punch above its weight.

He admitted that he would have been happier had the process for his nomination to serve as Commissioner

been smoother, but, ultimately, good sense had prevailed. It had been shown that in the EU, one could still become commissioner despite having a philosophy of life which was different from that of a few.

Deputy Prime Minister Tonio Borg pledged to work for Europe while continuing to love Malta and never forgetting where he came from. His absence would make his heart grow fonder, he said.

He admitted a sense of sadness at leaving behind the sensible debates he had been part of in the House, with all the surprises and traditions they had provided, and leaving the constituents of Balzan, Lija, Birkirkara, Mosta and Attard who had always returned him to Parliament.

Dr Borg said he could not agree more with ex-British Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who said a week was a long time in politics.

In one week he himself was leaving Parliament as a Deputy Prime Minister and taking up his duties as a European Commissioner. He said he had never sought the new post because he had been happy in his work, but he could not turn his back on the Prime Minister's call in unforeseen special circumstances.

In the 20 years he had spent in the House – after 10 years attempting to get in – he had always tried not to hurt anybody through the moments of difficulty, tension, disagreement, arguments and even harsh criticism.

His greatest honour and privilege did not result from being a minister but

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Deputy PM makes political career change to EU Commissioner

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serving as an MP, because the seat had been given to him by the electorate.

Dr Borg said that under five different Speakers he had seen Malta becoming a worthy member of the EU and punching above its weight around the Union's tables through different stages of historical developments.

His confirmation as EU Commissioner bore this out, even though he would have wished for a less laborious road there.

He expressed particular thanks to all the Opposition MPs who had shadowed him and other main speakers, including the whips of both sides. He felt he could not echo the late Pope John XXIII who, when asked how many people worked in the Vatican, had replied "about half of them". All parliamentary staff in Malta were hard and honest workers.

Dr Borg said he would be eternally grateful to Eddie Fenech Adami and Lawrence Gonzi, who had shown faith in him since 1982 and from both of whom he had learnt a lot.

Purposely leaving his family last, he reserved his greatest appreciation for his wife Adele, with whom he had grown and matured in law and politics. "She has always been a first-class customer care officer," he said. He also thanked his children, apologising for not always having been there for them.

Dr Borg said his experience had shown that Maltese politicians were always close to the people. Without making them sound like martyrs, their sacrifices should be better appreciated. The greatest satisfaction in politics lay in helping someone to get their due and initiating legislation that stood the tests of time.

Dr Borg said the satisfaction he got in the past 20 years was in being in a position to help others achieve what they were entitled for and deserved.

Concluding, Dr Borg said his political life to date had been interesting and had matured him. It had not always been smooth but replete with memories, and he hoped to finish a book in Brussels that had been "in an advanced state for a very long time". He wished to see politics in Malta done with more smiles, with those involved taking their work more seriously than they took themselves. Their principles were to be upheld "because they make us what we are". 

Messaġġ mill-Kummissarju Ewropew Dr Tonio Borg lill-Maltin ta' l-Awstralja

Nixtieq insellem lill-ħuti Maltin fl-Awstralja b'mod partikolari dawk ta' Victoria.

Jiena ġejt l-ewwel darba Melbourne fl-2007. Kienet l-ewwel żjara tiegħi fl-Awstralja. Mall-ewwel ammirajt l-imħabba għal dak kollu li hu Malti mill-Maltin li ighixu l-bogħod minn art twelidhom. L-entuzjażmu li biha ilqajtuni ikkonvincietni f'medda qasira ta' żmien illi nagħmel xi haġa uffiċjali li tiġbor din l-imħabba u sentiment u inbidilha f'xi haġa konkreta.

Kien għalhekk li meta ġejt l-Awstralja għat-tielet darba fl-2011, wara li kont akkumpanjajt lill-President Fenech Adami fil-2009, ħabbart uffiċjalment f'laqgħa mal-Community Council ta' Victoria, il-pubblikazzjoni fil-Gazzetta tal-Gvern tal-Abbozz ta' Ligi dwar il-Kunsill għall-Maltin li jghixu barra. Nifatkar li ipprezentajt dan l-abbozz lill-Professur Maurice Cauchi. Fi ftit ta' zmien, għaddejna l-abbozz unanimament mill-Parlament u f'Settembru li għadda kellna l-ewwel laqgħa tal-Kunsill li fil-fehma tiegħi kienet suċċess kbir.

Jiena issa nħart "Ministru" (teknikament Kummissarju) tal-Ewropa kollha responsabbli għas-saħħa u il-konsumatur. Nispera li f'dil-vesti jew fi rwol iehor inkun nista' niġi għar-raba' darba fl-Awstralja.

Jiena qatt ma niġi l-Awstralja b'idejja vojta. L-ewwel draba fl-2001 ħabbart il-estenzjoni taċ-ċittadinanza doppja għal "second generation Maltese" u lil hinn, fl-2009 ħabbart li se ssir il-Konvenzjoni fl-2010, u fl-2011 ħabbart it-twaqqif tal-Kunsill għall-Maltin li ighixu barra.

J'Alla nkompulu naħdmu lkoll kemma aħna għall-ġid ta' pajjżna u ta' uliedna huma fejn huma.

Dr Tonio Borg
Kummissarju Ewropew għas-Saħħa u l-Politika tal-Konsumatur

Message from EU Commissioner Dr Tonio Borg to the Maltese living in Australia

I would like to greet my Maltese brothers and sisters in Australia particularly those of Victoria.

I first came to Melbourne in 2007. It was my first visit to Australia. Immediately I admired the love that the Maltese who live far from their country of birth. The enthusiasm with which you welcomed me convinced me within a short space of time that I should do something official which takes this love and change it into something concrete.

Therefore, when I came to Australia for the third time in 2011, after I had accompanied President Fenech Adami in 2009, I made an official announcement at a meeting with the Community Council of Victoria about the publication of the draft Bill regarding the Council for Maltese Living Abroad. I recall that I had presented this Bill to Professor Maurice Cauchi. A short time later, we unanimously passed the bill in Parliament and last September we held the first meeting of the Council which in my view was a great success.

I have now been appointed "Minister" (technically Commissioner) of the whole of Europe responsible for health and the consumer. I hope that in this capacity or in some other role I will come to Australia for the fourth time.

I never come to Australia empty handed. On my first visit in 2001 I announced the extension of dual citizenship for second generation Maltese and beyond, in 2009 I announced that the Convention would be held in 2010 and in 2011 I announced the establishment of the Council for Maltese living abroad.

May we all continue to work for the benefit of our country and our children wherever they are.

Dr Tonio Borg
EU Commissioner for Health & Consumer Policy

Dr Francis Zammit Dimech appointed new Foreign Minister



Dr Francis Dimech (left) during the swearing-in ceremony with President George Abela (centre) and PM Lawrence Gonzi looking on.

Dr Francis Zammit Dimech was sworn in as Foreign Minister on 28 November 2012, succeeding Dr Tonio Borg following his appointment as EU Commissioner.

After the swearing-in ceremony Dr Zammit Dimech said that he had a long meeting with Dr Borg this morning and will carry on in his footsteps until the end of the legislature.

Dr Zammit Dimech was chairman of the parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee for the past two years. Prior to 2008, he held various ministerial portfolios which saw him responsible for communications, infrastructural projects, tourism and the arts.

Dr Zammit Dimech, a lawyer well-known for his oratory and good humour, is a former broadcaster, who as a young man was also heavily involved in activities for youths, having set up the Teens and Twenties Talent Trust, better known as the 4Ts.

Dr Zammit Dimech returned to the Cabinet yesterday after an absence of almost five years when he was sworn in as Foreign Minister, his most senior government position yet.

Speaking to timesofmalta.com after his swearing-in, Dr Zammit Dimech said: "Tonio Borg had laid out clear plans within his ministry so it will be my great pleasure to carry out these plans. Pending issues and those which need further work have been defined and I will represent a continuation of the sterling work that has already been done." ❖

Message from new Foreign Affairs Minister to Maltese living abroad

Gheżiež hbieb tiegħi

Dan l-ewwel messagg tiegħi lilkom bhala Ministru tal-Affarijiet Barranin, qed nghaddihulkom bl-isbah xewqat.

Bla dubju dan iż-żmien ta' ferħ u hena li fih infakkru t-twelid ta' Sidna Ġesu Kristu jgarrubna wkoll aktar lejn xulxin għax ifakkarna fi tradizzjonijiet u drawwiet li sawruna u tawna l-identità tagħna bhala Maltin. Intom ukoll minkejja li tinsabu 'l bogħod minn art twelidna bqajtu thaddnu t-tradizzjonijiet Maltin u nieħu gost nisma' li intom kważi kważi b'aktar entużjażmu minna f'Malta.

Nifhem li intom li tgħixu f'artijiet imbegħda thossu l-firda mill-gheżiež tagħkom aktar milli thossuha fi żminijiet oħra tas-sena. Naf ukoll li l-istess jgħrilhom il-familji tagħkom li jinsabu hawn Malta.

Iżda m'għandix dubju li anke intom f'dawn il-jiem tingħaqdu mal-familji, l-hbieb u l-komunitajiet Maltin biex tiċcelebraw dawn il-festi u ggeddu t-tradizzjonijiet li hadtu magħkom u li biż-żmien qed tgħadduhom liż-żgħar tagħkom.

F'din il-legislatura l-predeċessur tiegħi Dr Tonio Borg, hadem bis-shiħ sabiex jkun stabbilit aktar kuntatt haj magħkom, tant hu hekk li din is-sena gie fis-seħħ l-Att XX 2011 li permezz tiegħu gie mwaqqaf il-Kunsill għall-Maltin li jgħixu barra minn Malta. B'sodisfazzjon ngħid li f'Settembru saret l-ewwel seduta ta' dan il-Kunsill fejn il-membri kollha mahtura ltaqghu hawn Malta u iddiskutew diversi temi li jolqtu lilkom Maltin li tgħixu barra minn Malta.

Huwa ta' pjaċir għalija li issa bhala Ministru tal-Affarijiet Barranin jiena wkoll iċ-Ċermen ta' dan il-Kunsill u b'hekk se jkollu aktar kuntatt dirett mar-rappreżentanti tagħkom li naf li jinsabu herqan li permezz tiegħu ser jiddiskutu u jaħdmu aktar għan-nom tagħkom.

F'ismi u f'isem l-istaff kollu tal-Ministeru tal-Affarijiet Barranin nawguralkom l-isbah xewqat għal Milied hieni mal-familji u hbieb tagħkom u sena 2013 mimlija b'dak kollu li tixtieq galbkom.

Francis Zammit Dimech
Ministru tal-Affarijiet Barranin
10/12/2012



My dear friends,

This is my first message to you as Minister of Foreign Affairs and I convey it to you with my best wishes.

Undoubtedly this time of happiness and joy in which we remember the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ draws us closer to each other because it reminds us of the traditions and customs that have formed and given us our identity as Maltese. Even you, even though you live so far from our birthplace you continued to cherish the Maltese traditions and, I am pleased to hear, with almost more enthusiasm from us in Malta.

I appreciate that you, who are living in distant lands, feel the separation from your dear ones more at this time than at other times of the year. I also know that the same happens to your families living in Malta.

However, I have no doubt that even you in these days join with your families, your friends and the Maltese communities to celebrate these feasts and renew the traditions which you took with you and over time you pass on to your younger ones.

In this legislature my predecessor, Dr Tonio Borg, worked tirelessly to establish a more active contact with you, so much so that this year Act XX of 2011 came into effect, establishing the Council for Maltese living outside Malta. With satisfaction I say that in September the first meeting of this Council was held, when all the appointed members met here in Malta and discussed issues that affect you, the Maltese living outside Malta.

It is my pleasure that now as the Minister of Foreign Affairs I am also the Chairman of this Council and this I will have more direct contact with your representatives who I know are keen to discuss and work on your behalf on this Council.

On my behalf and that of all the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs I send you my best wishes for a Happy Christmas with your family and friends and a New Year 2013 that it full of what your heart desires.

Francis Zammit Dimech
Minister of Foreign Affairs
10/12/2012

MHA Event — October 2012

Il-Folklor Malti – Maltese Folklore

By Agnes Cauchi

The October presentation entitled "il-Folklor Malti – Maltese Folklore" was given by Mr Charles Mifsud, Consul General for Malta in Victoria, on October 16th, 2012.

Mr Mifsud started his presentation by asking the question "What is Folklore?" He came up with several answers. He said that :

- It comes from periods in history of lack of education. In the olden days few people went to school.
- The church's influence was at its peak. It had a lot of say in the everyday life of the Maltese.
- Traditions came down the ages. Some were sound, like medical aspects. For example, for the relief of cough, people drank the water of boiled borage (*fidloqqom*). The idea behind it was folklore, but the medicinal aspect is real.
- Rumours: Malta is small and people talk with each other. In no time these rumours spread like wildfire and keep being repeated from generation to generation.
- People trying to explain a phenomenon. In towns and villages there were certain people who were considered more knowledgeable than others, so they gave their



Guest speaker, Mr Charles Mifsud

interpretation of the phenomenon. In time, this interpretation became folklore.

- Punishment like fasting during Lent. It was not mandatory to fast during the days of Lent, but people used to be afraid of not following this rule. They were afraid that there will be consequences in the afterlife.

Mr Mifsud listed an array of traditions and folkloric beliefs on many topics such as :

- Pregnancy, the evil eye, Christmas, carnival, lent, Holy Week, trades, games music, mourning, feasts and other folklore, like

"il-quċċija", "l-għazziela", and shooting stars.

- Pregnancy, Lent and Holy Week top the list in the number of folkloric beliefs, and with reason. Pregnancy was always shrouded in mystery, whilst and Holy Week were naturally influenced by the church which had a big influence in Malta.

Some traditions and folklore are kept to this day, but most of them have been forgotten. ❌

MHA Event — November 2012

Kaċċa u Nsib – Hunting and Trapping in Malta

By Emmanuel Cilia

As a topic, Hunting and Trapping (Kaċċa u Nsib) has been very controversial in recent past in Malta and in the media around the EU. Malta has a long tradition and a well-established sub-culture involving generations of hunters and trappers. On recent estimates these form 4% of the general population.

Emmanuel gave us a brief global history of hunting taking us from pre-history up to modern times. Hunting and trapping has featured heavily in the socio economic life of early human development, whilst in the post-industrial age, hunting and trapping has evolved into more of a past time and sport amongst the developed world. In modern times regulations on guns and hunting have been developed to prevent species from going extinct. While hunting is still very popular, it has a lot more restrictions than any other era in its history.

In Malta the scope and scale of hunting and trapping is limited to rabbits and birds. During the Carthaginian occupation of the island, ship building/repair activities depleted the Maltese country side of indigenous timber, creating large



Guest speaker, Mr Emmanuel Cilia

rocky areas which could only support rabbits and birds habitats. Up to the time when the Knights of St John took possession of Malta, it was known that Malta was different from other regions of Europe, and land ownership and hunting privileges were not reserved to the aristocracy. According to the feudalistic tradition, the knights immediately introduced hunting restrictions. This hit heavily the Maltese people, since the wild rabbits were one of only very few sources of fresh meat that was available to them. On the other hand, harvesting the wild rabbit population by the Maltese helped control serious damages to their local crops.

The knights' arrival on the island changed this natural balance between the Maltese and the land. When Grandmaster Francisco Ximenes de Texada issued a temporarily limited total ban on hunting in February 1773, it caused protests among the local people, supported by a majority of Maltese priests. On 8 September 1775 the

unrest escalated into open riots, and on the following day, a group of revolting Maltese priests occupied the order's fort St. Elmo in Valletta. The so-called "rising of the priests" was immediately crushed, and its leaders were either sent to prison for a long time or executed.

It was suggested that this is the background on which the present-day controversy on hunting and trapping stems from. It appears that ever since the knight's arrival, the Maltese in general always had issues with any restrictions and regulations related to hunting and trapping.

On joining the EU in 2004 Malta pledged to comply with the EU Birds Directive, which strictly limits the hunting of wild birds according to the conservation status of each species. Since that time compliance with the Birds directive has not been satisfactory leading to Malta being liable to charges and penalties under EU jurisdictions.

Information was given on how Malta is located on the central Mediterranean flyway, one of the three main flyways used by birds to travel between Africa and Europe. This is the only route where birds must cross a large body of water on their migration. At the end of the talk there were several questions and discussion on the topic covered. ❌

Birds in cages used as lures



VSL Concert and MHA Bursaries Awards 2012

On Saturday 17th November a few committee members of the Maltese Historical Association attended the end of year concert that the students who are currently studying Maltese at the Victorian School of Languages (VSL) put on for the parents and friends.

The reason for the attendance by MHA committee was to award bursaries to four students who either topped their class or showed a marked improvement in their learning.

We know the importance of the continuation of our culture and language in the state of Victoria. The aim of awarding the Bursaries, which have become an annual event, is to encourage young people to learn the language of their grandparents and understand and appreciate more the culture of the Maltese people.

This year's recipients are Mary Jane Attard, Jasmine Bonnici, Sarah Mercieca and Nathan Mercieca.

While we congratulate these students, we also wish them well in their future studies. We value and appreciate the financial support which the MHA receives from the Maltese Literature Group, the Bank of Valletta and the Travel Haven towards these bursaries. ❖

Top two photos right: Students at the concert and preparing for the Christmas pageant. *Right:* MHA President Mrs Frances Bonnici with Sarah Mercieca. *Far right:* MCCV President Prof Maurice Cauchi with Nathan Mercieca. *Bottom right:* Mrs Bonnici with student Mary Jane Attard. Below: Prof Cauchi with Jasmine Bonnici and one of the Maltese teachers, Mr Mark Bonello.



Reskeon Seniors member turns 100 years old

By Paul Vella

At last, we had the opportunity to see one of our members celebrating her 100th birthday. Annetta Azzilla had been a member of Reskeon Maltese Association and Reskeon Seniors Group for many years, along with her late husband, and son, Paul.

On Saturday, 27th October, she celebrated her birthday surrounded by her family and friends at a special dinner.

The following Wednesday, 31st October, at the meeting of Reskeon Seniors Group, Merrilands Community Centre, she was welcomed with cheers and clapping by members as soon as she entered the hall.

After the initial prayers at the start of the meeting and the singing of the Maltese and Australian National Anthems, Co-Ordinator Salvina Vella, presented Annetta with a bouquet of flowers and a special birthday cake. We wish Annetta many more birthdays and many years of good health and happiness. ❖



Annetta Azzilla celebrates her 100th birthday with (from left) Annetta's children, Vivienne, Paul, Mitri and Alfred with the Reskeon Seniors' Co-Ordinator Salvina Vella

Seniors enjoy a day at Maroondah Dam and Badger Weir

By Paul Vella

On Thursday, October 18, a group of 48 members of Reskeon Seniors Group enjoyed a day out to Maroondah Dam and Badger Weir Park.

The weather was nice and warm and we were lucky to have a day like this after a few days of cold and wet weather.

We travelled through Yarra Glen and we stopped for free morning tea and biscuits at Badger Weir Park. While there, members enjoyed the company of some beautiful Rosellas which were feeding from their very own hands.

From there we travelled to Maroondah Dam where we had lunch. Everyone brought their own lunch and drinks, although tea and coffee was available. The group provided some fruit for dessert.

A lot of members enjoyed walks around the park and some even braved the steep climb to the top of the dam. What a view. It was hard to believe that the dam was overflowing after so many years of drought.

All members enjoyed the day and asked for more outings like these. We thank all members for spending the day like one happy family and leaving the place behind very clean by taking their rubbish back home as advised by the park administration. Thanks to those who organised the day. ❖



Remembering Bali Bombing victim Anthony Cachia

By Paul Vella

This year we commemorated the 10th Anniversary of the Bali Bombing by terrorists that killed 202 persons at the Sari Club. Among the 88 Australian victims was Maltese, Anthony Frances Cachia, 32, son of Reskeon members Carmen and Charles Cachia of Reservoir (pictured right).

During an interview with me for my program on Community Radio 3ZZZ, Carmen and Charles recalled the events of the night of that tragedy. They told me that they had dinner with their son, Anthony, daughter, Angela, her husband and two sons. After dinner, Charles asked his son to go to the hotel to watch car racing, a sport he loved so much, but Anthony told him that he had to meet some friends at the Sari Club.

When they were at the hotel asleep, around 11 pm, Charles and Carmen said they heard a loud explosion but didn't know what happened until Charlie's sister from Box Hill rang them to tell them they heard there was a bombing at Bali. It took six weeks for the authorities to find the body which was returned to Melbourne. A Mass was held at St Joseph the Worker. A few weeks ago, Carmen and Charlie travelled to Bali once again for the special ceremonies in remembrance of the innocent victims. ❖



Id-dieta Mediterranja u l-ikel Malti



Il-partecipanti fiċ-Ċentru Malt waqt l-attività

Minn Paul Lia

Nhar il-Ġimgħa 16 ta' Novembru 2012, kellna l-attività 'Mediterranean Diet – The Maltese Way' fiċ-Ċentru Malti ta' Parkville fil-Victoria.

Din l-attività hija parti mill-progett 'Building a Permanent Bridge' permezz ta' fondi mogħtija mill-Gvern Federali Awstraljan permezz tal-programm ġdid 'Aged Care Service Improvement Healthy Ageing Group' (ACSIHAG), li il-Kunsil Malti tal-Victoria qed jirċievi għal dawn it-tlett snin li ġejjin.

L-għan ta' din l-attività hi li nagħtu tagħrif lill-membri tal-kommunita' Maltija dwar kif għandhom jieħdu ħsieb saħħithom aħjar permezz ta' dieta ibbilancjata skond dak li tagħllem id-dieta Mediterranja.

Aktar minn 80 persuna attendew għal dan l-avveniment, fosthom is-Sur David Flood u is-Sinjura Melissa Boyle mid-'Department of Health & Ageing', is-Sinjura Rosemary Attard, Direttriċi tal-welfer fi hdan il-Kunsill Malti tal-Victoria, is-Sinjura Annalisa Cannizzaro, 'Educator' ma' Carers Victoria, is-Sinjura Remy Vejano li hi il-'manager' ta' Cumberland Manor f' North Sunshine u Sister Doris Falzon, id-Direttriċi ta' Rosary Home ġewwa Keilor Downs.

Din il-ġurnata inbdiet b'informazzjoni mogħtija mid-dietician Maltija, is-Sinjura Ann Pantelleresco. Din it-taħdita kienet ta' interess kbir



Fuq: Salib ta' Dejma, magħmul mis-Sur Freddie Asciack

Lemin: Xena mill-farsa ta' Wenzu u Rozi.



Josephine Gauci u Rose Nunner li ħejjew l-ikla



għal dawk prezenti. Fost affarijiet oħra tkellmet dwar kif l-ikel Malti, maż-żmien beda jiġi miżjud b'ingredjenti ħżiena għas-saħħa u x'għandha nagħmlu biex nibdlu dawk l-ingredjenti b'oħrajn li ma jagħmlux ħsara lil saħħitna speċjalment fiż-żieda tal-piż.

Wara kellna lis-Sur Anton Camilleri, chef Malti li spjega kif għandha issir il-balbuljata tradizzjonali Maltija. Wara kellna farsa li saret mill-haddiema tal-dipartiment tal-welfer tal-Kunsill Malti

tal-Victoria, is-Sur Freddie Asiack, is-Sinjura Maryanne Axiak u haddiema Maltija, Maryrose Mintoff ta' Cumberland Manor, dar tal-anzjani li il-Kunsill Malti tal-Victoria qiegħed jaħdem fi qrib magħha. Din il-farsa ta' Wenzu u Rozi giet milqugħa tajjeb ħafna minn dawk prezenti.

Il-ġurnata intemmet b'ikla ross il-forn, imħejjija mill haddiema tal-Kunsill Malti tal-Victoria u bħala deżerta kellna imqaret u ġelat. ❀

ECCV bestows Life Membership on Prof. Maurice Cauchi



At the Annual General Meeting of the Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), held on Tuesday 27 November, Prof. Maurice Cauchi was awarded life Membership of the ECCV by the Chairman, Mr Joe Caputo. The award was made for outstanding service and dedication to the ECCV over many years.

Prof. Cauchi was Chairperson of the ECCV between 1989 and 1991, and was involved in ECCV committees for several years prior to that ☒

FMLA Elections for additional Committee Members in January 2013 - Call for Nominations

The Committee of the Federation of Maltese Living Abroad (FMLA) has recently modified the Bylaws of the Constitution to increase the number of members on the Committee from the current 3 per region to 5 per region (Australasia, Europe and the Americas).

For this purpose, elections will take place in the last week of January 2013 to elect another 2 committee members from each region.

Nominations are sought from:

Affiliated organisations may wish to nominate a suitable person to take part in these elections.

Individual persons may nominate themselves for this election.

Completed Nomination Forms ([click here](#) to download form) must be emailed to and received by all three election officers listed below **by 31 December 2012**.

- Eddie Micallef, Melbourne - emi87374@bigpond.net.au
- Fr. Victor Camilleri, London - victor-camilleri@hotmail.com
- Louis Vella, San Francisco - lvella10@hotmail.com ☒

Second Generation Maltese American Judge re-elected to Supreme Court of Michigan

At the elections held last November in the USA, Judge Brian K. Zahra (right) won re-election as Justice of the Supreme Court of Michigan. He received an estimated 2 million votes to outpace other judicial appointees by a margin of 500,000 votes. He defeated Mindy Barry and Shelia Johnson in the general election on November 6, winning 49.5% of the vote. In the USA judges have to contest elections for office.

Judge Zahra is the son of Maltese immigrants and, as he says many times, he is proud to be of Maltese descent. His father is Mr Larry Zahra, UOM, PHD, who is Honorary Consul General of Malta for Michigan and a Member of the Council for Maltese Living Abroad representing the USA.

Justice Zahra has been active in many civic and charitable



organizations, including the Maltese American Community Club and the Maltese American Benevolent Society, of which he is a past officer. He is married to Suzanne and they have two children. ☒

Farewell, Frank Calleja

By Prof Maurice Cauchi

It is with sorrow that we announce the passing away of Frank Calleja on Friday 7 December 2012 aged 95 years.

Frank has contributed significantly to the Maltese community in general and to the MCCV in particular. From the very beginning he provided a great deal of assistance to many single men who came out from Malta, including providing them with a dinner on Saturday evenings and helping to obtain employment for them, often acting as interpreter, and in general ensuring that they settled successfully.

As a delegate to the Maltese Community Council of Victoria, Frank made a considerable contribution towards providing social and welfare services for the Maltese and their friends in the state of Victoria. He used to spend quite some time behind the telephone at the Maltese Centre answering queries from the community.

For some years he was a member of the executive of the MCCV in charge of its welfare programme.

For several years he was President of La Vallette, a very active organization. He was also an active member of the George Cross Soccer Club Committee

He participated in the MCCV annual fete which provided funding for welfare services as well as raising funds for the establishment of the Maltese Community Centre in Parkville. He also assisted in organising an overseas trip which raised considerable funds for the construction of the Centre.



As part of his association's activities Frank organised a Pensioners and Retiree group which meets regularly each week at premises he was able to obtain from the local council. Frank organised regular activities for the group and kept an eye on aged members who may require assistance

from time to time.

Frank was awarded the Manoel de Vilhena Award (1998) "for outstanding contribution in community services of the Maltese", the Victorian Award "for meritorious service to the community" (2005) and the Order of Australia Medal (2006) "for services to the Maltese Community of Melbourne through the activities of the Maltese La Vallette Association".

A few months ago, Frank was awarded the newly-established MCCV Community Award for his contribution to Welfare services. ☒

Mgr Charles Scicluna ordained Auxiliary Bishop

On 24 November 2012 Mgr Charles Scicluna was ordained Auxiliary Bishop, succeeding the late Mgr Annetto Depasquale, who passed away last November. As Auxiliary Bishop, Mgr Scicluna will be Archbishop Paul Cremona's right hand man.

Prior to being nominated Auxiliary Bishop, Mgr Scicluna served as Promoter of Justice at the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, which was led by then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger before he became Pope. He had a frontline role in uncovering some of the most difficult abuse scandals that came to light in recent years.

Mgr Scicluna's day started as he left his Lija home with his parents for the parish church of The Transfiguration, where he stopped to say a prayer and was joined by Mgr Cremona.



Mgr Charles Scicluna with Archbishop Cremona.

Mgr Scicluna and Mgr Cremona, followed by the former's parents, drove through Naxxar Road, Birkirkara Valley and Santa Venera, passing through St Joseph High Road and stopping at the MUSEUM chapel in Blata l-Bajda, where Mgr Scicluna and Mgr Cremona said a prayer at the shrine of St George Preca and in front of the Holy Sacrament. The two bishops then left chapel and the cortege headed to Valletta.

Mgr Scicluna and Mgr Cremona entered a packed St John's Co-Cathedral shortly followed by Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and President George Abela. Dignitaries at St John's Co-Cathedral included the Chief Justice and members of the judiciary, past Presidents Eddie Fenech Adami and Ugo Mifsud Bonnici, EU Health Commissioner Tonio Borg, Opposition leader Joseph Muscat, ministers and MPs.

The ordination ceremony began with the reading out of an official proclamation by the Pope followed by Mgr Cremona's homily in which he thanked the Pope for sending Mgr Scicluna "with his talents and experience - to help me and the Church in Malta on its way towards holiness".

The two-and-a-half-hour ceremony was peppered with metaphors depicting Mgr Scicluna as a shepherd, who, alongside the Archbishop - who has experienced health problems in recent months - will lead the Church in Malta.

Referring to St John's gospel, Mgr Cremona spoke of the value of the sheep at the centre of the parable and in his homily called on Mgr Scicluna to cherish the responsibility of being entrusted to guide the sheep.

"Our dignity as bishops derives from the fact that we are at the service of the dignity of the people entrusted to our care. Today, our Lord is entrusting you with what is most precious to him - the human being," he said.

"It is a great honour and a sign of God's great trust that He first chooses the Church and then some of its members, and entrusts them with the care of human beings. This is what he is entrusting you with today. The episcopate is not a point of arrival but a way of perfection for those chosen."

Archbishop Paul Cremona (left) with Bishop Charles Scicluna in a message to the new bishop, Mgr Cremona said "today, our Lord is entrusting you with what is most precious to him, that is, the human being. Our dignity stems from this. It is a great honour and a sign of God's great trust that God first chooses the Church and then some of its members and entrusts them with the care of human persons. This is what he is entrusting you with today."

Mgr Cremona said that "The fullness of the ministerial priesthood which you will be receiving in your Episcopal Ordination is the mission through which the Bishop helps the faithful to live their calling as Christians. This means that the Bishop's is not a personal dignity: it is given to him for others. It is a great dignity and a great responsibility which the Church entrusts primarily to Bishops in a specific place and entrusts them mainly with all the means it has available for the sanctification of Christians: namely the sacraments and the Word of God."

The homily was followed by the formal interrogation by Mgr Cremona, before the new bishop lay prostrate on a red carpet in front of the altar as a sign of his submissiveness before God.

Each of the bishops present laid their hands on Mgr Scicluna's head and Mgr Cremona, as lead consecrator, anointed Mgr Scicluna with the oil that officially made him bishop.

The ceremony is steeped in tradition and as Mgr Scicluna knelt before the Archbishop, he was anointed with oil and presented with the Book of Gospels to go and preach the Word of God with patience and sound teaching.



The Archbishop also slipped a ring on Mgr Scicluna's right hand as a seal of fidelity to preserve, unblemished, the bride of God - the holy Church. Finally, he was presented with the mitre, signifying his resolve to pursue holiness, and the pastoral staff or crosier symbolising a shepherd's crook to watch over the flock.

This was the time for a smile to reappear on the cherub-like face of the new Auxiliary Bishop, as he kissed and embraced the bishops, receiving an especially big bear hug from Cardinal Prospero Grech, who was also ordained at the Vatican this year.

Cardinal Grech was in Malta, together with Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, the former Archbishop of Westminster, on the invitation of Mgr Scicluna. Many more were invited to attend but Mgr Scicluna's ordination coincided with a consistory at the Vatican where the Pope appointed six new cardinals.

In a brief message at the end of the ceremony, Mgr Scicluna promised to give his life for the people. He thanked Mgr Cremona for his words which he said he will etch in his heart, Cardinal Prospero Grech, the other foreign and Maltese bishops, his parents, his family and the rest of the congregation.

In his first words at the end of his Episcopal Ordination as Auxiliary Bishop, the diminutive bishop cracked a joke about his height. "I have a short message for you - don't expect big things from me," he said, as a ripple of applause burst the sombre mood when he gave a short speech at the end of the ceremony. The 53-year-old bishop assured Archbishop Paul Cremona he would carve the words he spoke during the homily in the scripture of his life for the good of all.

At the end of the ceremony, Mgr Scicluna switched between Maltese, English and Italian to thank all the bishops who flew to Malta to be by his side, reserving the final appreciation for the best gift from God - that his parents were still alive to witness this moment.

"I promise to give my life to you all," he said. ✠

Maltese Christmas Traditions

Christmas is a special time of the year for the Maltese regardless which part of the world they live in. It is a time when the family gets together to celebrate this important feast in a Maltese traditional way. It starts on Christmas Eve when most attend Midnight Mass with churches in Malta typically full with people.

Christmas Cribs

The Churches are decorated with lights and a nativity crib, 'il-Presepu', built by volunteers, which depict the nativity scene and life in those days. The cribs are decorated with figurines called 'pasturi' representing biblical figures such as shepherds and angels. Today mechanical cribs are commonplace with figures performing some kind of movement. The figure of Baby Jesus is central to the nativity scene and is placed on the main altar at midnight on Christmas night. At Epiphany it is traditional to put the three figures of the Magi in the crib.

Rich noblemen from Italy first introduced Christmas cribs to Malta. Initially they were not popular and most were burnt down. The first true Maltese crib is believed to have been made in Malta in 1617 and was displayed in the Dominican Friars Church in Rabat. In St Peter's Monastery in Mdina, a crib dating back to 1670 is highly treasured and looked after by the Benedictine Nuns who live in the monastery. At about the same time, another Maltese man made a crib with moving parts powered by water!

As cribs became more popular they also became more 'Maltese' with people replacing the Italian looking buildings and trades people with local ones. Flour windmills were and are still popular buildings to feature in a crib scene. The first imported Italian 'pasturi' were very expensive and most people could not afford them. So people started making their own 'pasturi' from rough clay and plaster. Some of these figures still exist today. These days 'pasturi' are often made of plastic.

Procession with Baby Jesus

By the early to mid 20th century, cribs were thought of as old fashioned and not very popular anymore. To stop the decline of Christmas, in 1907, Fr George Preca, recently declared the first Maltese saint, founded a children's religious doctrine society called 'MUSEUM'. In 1921 he started a tradition of having a Christmas Eve procession with a life size figure of the Baby Jesus being carried at the head of the procession.

At sunset on Christmas Eve in 1921, Fra Diegu Street in the town of Hamrun, where Fr Preca lived, was crowded with children and adults ready to take part in the first procession. In those days, street lighting was very poor in Malta and so many people brought lanterns with them to help them see their way during the procession and to shed light on the statue of Baby Jesus carried shoulder-high by four boys. The different types of lamps included, gas powered bicycle headlamps, oil lamps



Salvatore Debono Nativity Scene at <http://maltacribs.bugs3.com>

used on farmers' carts, coloured paper lanterns, Venetian lights, palm fronds and olive branches. The idea became very popular with people of all ages and so the very special Maltese traditional began. These processions are still popular today and form part of the Christmas Eve celebrations.

In 1986 the 'Friends of the Crib' society was formed in Malta and now they have over 500 members. Every year in the weeks running up to Christmas the Friends put on an exhibition of about 100 cribs of all shapes and sizes.

Maltese houses are typically also decorated with Christmas cribs of all shapes, sizes and materials. Large figures of Baby Jesus are often put behind street-facing windows or in balconies and lit at night. Most households have a Christmas tree decorated with light bulbs, tinsel and other decorations.

Another Maltese tradition is the sowing of wheat, grain and canary seeds on cotton wool in flat pans five weeks before Christmas. These are left to grow in dark corners in the house until the seeds produce white grass-like shoots called 'gulbiena'. The pans with the fully-grown shoots are then used to decorate the crib or the statue of Baby Jesus.

'Priedka tat-Tifel'

One Maltese Christmas tradition is the 'Priedka tat-Tifel' which means 'the sermon of the child' – a tradition that is still followed by Maltese living as far away from Malta as Australia.

A boy or a girl, normally aged between 7 and 10 years, delivers a sermon about the story of the Nativity at the Midnight Mass instead of the priest! The children learn the sermon by heart and start learning it a few weeks usually under the guidance of the local parish priest. The parents are also very excited and nervous about the performance, as they would have helped the children to learn the sermon. The boy or girl tells the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem and is encouraged to give their sermon a personal delivery which will touch the hearts of the church-goers.

George Sapiano delivered the first known children's sermon by an altar boy in 1883, in the parish church of Luqa. It has also become common for local churches to organise a mini-pageant with children dressed up as shepherds,

Joseph and Mary carrying a Baby Jesus figure acting out the story of the Nativity. This re-enactment starts at 11pm and is followed by Midnight Mass.

A popular Maltese carol is 'Ninni La Tibkix Iżjed' which means 'sleep and cry no more' was written by the Jesuit Priest, Fr. Andrew Schembri (1774-1862) from Luqa for Maltese migrants in Tunis.

Christmas Concerts

Schools in Malta often hold a Christmas concert consisting of Christmas Carols singing, plays with a Christmas theme, pantomimes and poetry recitals. It is enjoyed by the children and teachers alike. Christmas parties are also often

held in each class. Sometimes the children bring over food which their parents prepare at home and which is shared with everyone in their class. Gifts are exchanged and sometimes money is collected which is then given to charity.

Voluntary organisations organise Carol Singing evenings in old people's homes and hospitals, helping to cheer up the elderly and sick with the spirit of Christmas.

Community Chest Fund

Under the patronage of the President of Malta, the Community Chest Fund sets up a tent in Valletta, where volunteers help to raise donations of cash.

Every year the Fund runs a very popular TV-based fund raising campaign called 'L-Istrina' over the Christmas period, which has become another Maltese tradition to remember and provide for those in need. The campaign raises a substantial sum of money donated by viewers which is later in the year distributed to charitable organisations, such as orphanages and other worthwhile causes, which often rely on donations to continue their community work.

Christmas delicacies

Maltese people enjoy a wide range of food at Christmas. Traditionally, the Maltese housewife kept the fattest rooster, known in Maltese as 'hasi', especially for Christmas Lunch, which was roasted at the local bakery in a casserole full of potatoes and vegetables.

The traditional desert served at Christmas was the Treacle Ring, 'Qaghqa tal-Ghasel', and to finish it off, a hot Chestnut and Cocoa Soup, 'Imbuljuta tal-Qastan', served as a cosy night cap during the cold December days in Malta.

Today the traditional Maltese menu has made way for Christmas Turkey, Christmas Cakes, Christmas Puddings and Mince Pies, all inherited from the British during over one and a half centuries British rule (1800-1964) in Malta. The Italian *Panetone* has also become a Christmas favourite. ❄️

[Adapted from: *Christmas in Malta*
<http://www.whychristmas.com/cultures/malta.shtml>]

