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The Challenge of Engaging Maltese-Australian Youth in Maltese Community Life in Australia

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ABSTRACT

As the first generation Maltese community in Australia is ageing and shrinking in size, the younger generations have shown little or no interest in continuing the Maltese language, culture and traditions. This Paper deals with the challenge that Maltese community organisations in Australia have been, and are still facing in engendering the interest and involvement of the younger Maltese-Australian generations in the Maltese language, culture and traditions as well as their Maltese heritage. Recommendations are presented on what action should be taken to ensure that the Maltese communities in Australia do not become extinct in a matter of a couple of decades.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The future of a small community like the Maltese community in Australia depends for its survival on its youth readily identifying with their ethnic background and cultural heritage and being prepared to show a commitment to their community and a readiness to take on the leadership roles.

1.2 In his book *Maltese Achievers in Australia*, Professor Maurice Cauchi states:

“It has been argued that maintenance of culture is crucial within an ethnic community, but it has not been so clear as to whether this is considered necessary merely for the peace of mind of the first generation or whether it confers some specific benefit to the second generation persons themselves.”¹

1.3 With the ageing of the Maltese-born first generation, the Maltese community in Australia appears to be soon facing a crisis: there are no young people come up to take over the leadership of the Maltese organisations. While we may console ourselves that this is not a problem only within the Maltese community and, in fact, it goes right across other ethnic groups in Australia, in the case of the Maltese community, the problem is more pressing due to the smaller size of the community, which has shrunk by 25% in the past 25 years.

1.4 Most importantly, the Maltese language uptake in Australia seems to be declining as can be seen from the difficulty in getting the minimum of 15 students selecting Maltese language at VCE level on a national level to ensure its continued VCE status. This contrasts with the language uptake in other ethnic groups, which starts very early as it is compulsory, not just within their school system but also through their parents. For instance, every Greek child goes to Greek language school every Saturday. It is the same with the Italians. The Italian government also funds Catholic schools in Australia to teach Italian. For these other ethnic groups, this early start in the language ensures an equally early identification on the part of the younger generation with the relevant culture.

1.5 There is no simple answer to the often raised question as to why parents, who have chosen to identify themselves with their Maltese background and have been involved with the Maltese community in Australia for many years, have been unable to convince their children that they should also be involved in the life of the Maltese community. This paper attempts to discuss the factors at play that may provide an explanation of this issue.

1.6 The following are some concepts that will be referred to in this Paper:

- **Youth:** There are no exact ages at which ‘youth’ can be said to start and end. The Victorian State Government uses the age span of 12 to 25 years to define ‘young

¹ Cauchi, Prof. Maurice N, *Maltese Achievers in Australia*, Maltese Community Council of Victoria, 2006, p 371

people'. The period of 'youth' has been getting longer as young people are now achieving important life milestones at a later age. Thus, the term 'youth' is used to signify the period between childhood and adulthood during which experimentation with their role in society and their identity is acceptable behaviour.

- **Culture:** All the aspects of life that influence how we view, relate to and build our reality and it covers language, institutions, ideologies, the arts, ways of relating, dress, food, social norms, shared understandings and histories, and spirituality. A culture is created, shared and underpinned by a social community.
- **Cultural Identity:** An individual's awareness and appreciation of their cultural heritage and values and the sentimental importance that they place on belonging to a specific cultural group.
- **Cultural Values:** These are values that members of a cultural group hold as important guiding principles of how they should live their lives.
- **First-generation:** Persons who migrated to Australia after or around the age of 10 to 12 years and lived their early childhood, including the period of key language development and socialisation, in Malta.
- **Second-generation:** Persons who were either born in Australia and have at least one parent born overseas, or migrated to Australia before turning 12 years.
- **Third-generation:** Australian-born children of second-generation Maltese-Australians.

2 Maltese in Australia

2.1 The 1981 Australian Census recorded 57,000 Malta-born people in Australia. Since then the Malta-born population has been in steady decline, dropping to 56,232 in 1986, 53,858 in 1991, 50,879 in 1996, 46,980 in 2001 and 43,708 in the latest Census of 2006. This represents an overall decrease of 13,300 or just under a quarter (23.4 per cent) over the last 25 years.

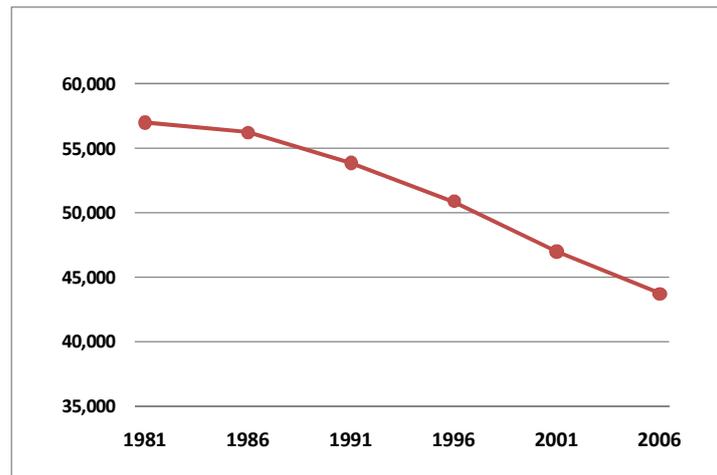


Figure 1: Malta-born population decline in Australia
 (Source: Australian Census, 1981-2006)

2.2 The 2006 distribution by state and territory showed that Victoria had the largest number with 20,850 or 47.7 per cent followed by New South Wales (16,980 or 38.8 per cent), Queensland (2,780 or 6.3 per cent) and South Australia (1,630 or 3.7 per cent).

2.3 In 2006 the median age of the Malta-born population living in Australia was 60 years compared with 46.8 years for all overseas-born and 37.1 years for the total Australian population. This means that in 2010 more than one-half of those born in Malta will be aged 64 and over. Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the relevant statistics.

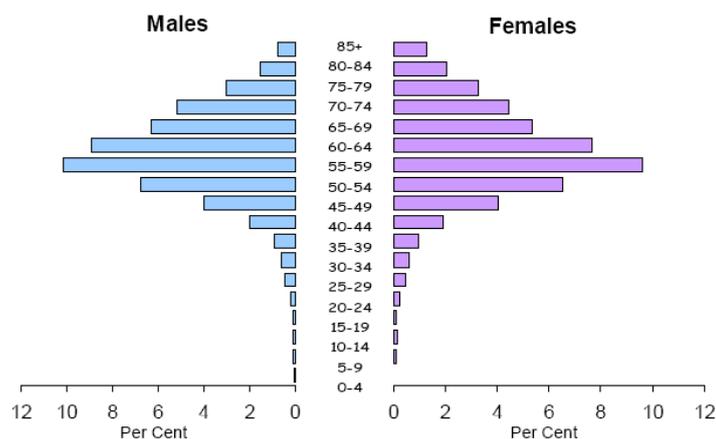


Figure 2: Age and Gender of Malta-born population in Australia
 (Source Australian Census, 2006)

2.4 In the 2006 census, 153,805 people identified themselves as having Maltese ancestry, of which 77,324 were male and 76,481 were female. Given that 43,708 were born in Malta, there were 110,097 Maltese-Australians of second, third and subsequent generation.

2.5 The main languages spoken at home by Malta-born people in Australia were Maltese (57.7 per cent), English (39.9 per cent) and Italian (1.0 per cent). Of the 26 120 Malta-born who spoke a language other than English at home, 87.9 per cent spoke English very well or well and 11.0 per cent spoke English not well or not at all.

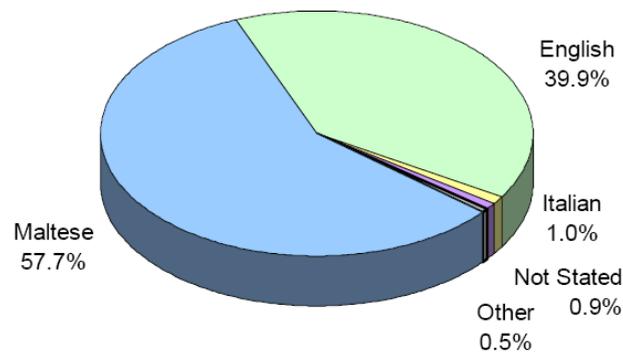


Figure 3: Language Spoken at Home
(Source: Australian Census, 2006)

3 Generations of Maltese-Australians

3.1 When discussing the *first generation*, one refers to youth born in Malta from Maltese parents, having the following characteristics:

- First generation have an advantage over second and third generation of Maltese-Australian youth in that they generally had a feeling for, or at least experienced, Maltese culture in Malta and typically speak in Maltese with their parents.
- As part of the family unit, they had a close relationship to their parents as they become a strong family unit with shared responsibilities with their parents. Many first generation children, particularly those born in Malta, were in fact direct contributors to family finances and had assisted in the purchase of the family home and furniture and other items necessary for family settlement in Australia.
- They generally had bonded with their grandparents at an early age and only spoken to them in the Maltese language.
- While attending Australian schools, they held firmly to their Maltese background and readily identified themselves as such.

- Their advancement progressed with the advancement of their family and generally sought relationships with youth of the same background.

3.2 When discussing the *second and third generations*, one refers to youth born in Australia, from one or both Malta-born parents, having the following characteristics:

- These youth have considerable issues with identification with their Maltese ancestry.
- They attended Australian pre-schools and primary schools and mixed with Australian born children as well as children of other ethnic backgrounds. To them, the Australian multi-cultural environment was the common culture of the group.
- Often there was a considerable gap between them and their parents, sometimes resulting in family conflict. Some of the youths seek to distance themselves from their parents' background as a form of retaliation or defence mechanism.
- These youths also believe that their progress within the school system or subsequently was not dependent on their parents' culture or background.

3.3 The further remote one is from the first generation, the deeper the dilution of cultures experienced by the younger generations. Generally, young people do not give any importance to the ethnic background of their friends.

3.4 There are many second and third generation Maltese who have achieved and done very well academically, professionally and socially without having to rely on any contacts within the Maltese community or identification with it. Many are already well-known in their own professional and social networks and, while it would be tremendous to have them with a foot in both camps, they really have no need to break out of their established social circles to join another of people with a Maltese background.

4 Factors Influencing the Retention of Maltese Language and Culture

4.1 The maintenance of culture and language is important from the point of view of identity. It is the basis upon which youth will become interested in their parents' background and be prepared to belong to the same group.

4.2 Factors that enable early self-identity of second and third generation youth with their Maltese heritage include²:

- The advantage of the first generation having absorbed that culture overseas if they had spent some of their formative years in Malta,
- The presence and influence of Maltese grandparents in their life,
- Both parents being first generation Maltese,
- Having relatives and friends of Maltese background,
- Joining sporting clubs with members of Maltese background,
- Attending secondary schools and universities where there is a number of students of Maltese background,
- Visits to Malta to experience Maltese language and culture first hand,
- Access to websites that provide information about Maltese culture, language and other current affairs taking place in Malta, and
- Attending ‘Maltese flavoured’ social events that are more in line with youth lifestyle, such as, the *Made in Malta* events held in Melbourne in May 2009 and January 2010.

4.3 However, on the other side of the ledger, there are other factors at play that hinder the retention of Maltese culture and language by second and third generation youth include³:

- Marriage of Maltese with partners from other cultures (in fact, the Maltese in Australia have one of the highest rate of mixed marriages),
- Long distances from Maltese community centres where cultural activities are held,
- Low concentration of people of Maltese background speaking the language
- A general lack of interest in Maltese culture and language,
- A fear that maintaining Maltese culture would adversely impact the young person’s relationships with peers from other cultures including mainstream Australians, and

² Cauchi, Prof. Maurice N, op.cit., p 379

³ Cauchi, Prof. Maurice N, op.cit., p 379

- A mistaken belief that learning Maltese would interfere with obtaining a high level of proficiency in the English language.

5 The Youth Challenge Facing the Maltese Community in Australia

- 5.1 In order to appreciate the complex nature of the challenge that the Maltese community is facing in Australia with getting its youth interested in their Maltese heritage, one needs to understand better the self-identity issues that young people living in twenty-first century Australia have to deal with in their daily lives.
- 5.2 The society and the world that young people live in today is vastly different from that in which their parents grew up. With the global adoption of the internet and mobile phones as our means of constant communication, technology has taken over our lives and we have become ever more dependent on it. Just as significant have been the social changes that have taken place in the past three or four decades, changing beyond recognition the lifestyle, sensitivity and identity of the younger generations. It is in such a constantly changing landscape that young people must struggle to find their identity and their place in society.⁴
- 5.3 As young people evolve from childhood to adulthood in their quest for independence, their relationships with peers become more important to them. As they broaden their social interactions, issues of identity (the question of ‘who am I?’) feature more prominently on their minds. Internal biological and psychological factors as well as their whole social environment not just the immediate one of family, friends, school and local neighbourhood influence the formation of their identity.⁵
- 5.4 It is widely acknowledged that ‘identity is very important to young people, particularly in relation to participating in community and cultural activities and being independent’.⁶ Self-identity forms the core of the ‘self’ and is critical in establishing whether people take part in social activities and how they engage. While the development of self-identity is a

⁴ Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), *Kaleidoscopic Cultures: Exploring the Self-Identity of Young People in a Multicultural and Globalised Society*, Melbourne, Research Paper 2009 p 12

⁵ Dolby, NE 2001, *Constructing race: youth, identity and popular culture in South Africa*, Albany, New York, State University of New York Press.

difficult process for any young person, studies suggest that it is more difficult for those in ethnic minorities as they are frequently required to resolve a conflict between two or more potentially clashing cultures. This predicament is commonly described as ‘caught between two cultures’. In this tension of cultures the young person is pulled in opposite directions, on the one hand, by the desire to ‘fit in’ with their peer group and, on the other, by parental expectations for particular behaviours and attitudes.⁷

5.5 It is interesting to note that identity shifts do take place and are not just intergenerational. They can also occur within the same generation. In one study of second-generation Italian-Australian young people, it was found that a rejection of their Italian culture and language during adolescence shifted not just to a return to their heritage later in life but also high involvement in community activities.⁸

5.6 The ECCV Research Paper recognises that the way in which the up and coming generation approach the concept of identity is very different from previous generations:

“Generation Y is also creating a fresh approach to the concept of identity: ‘For young people today, identity is not really about being neither “here nor there” or belonging to some kind of an “imagined community” but instead ... [about] establishing and maintaining a place for oneself within a diverse personal network ... far more so than being about belonging to any particular, ascribed nameable identity group’ (Hopkins, cited in Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues, 2008). Young people are coming of age in a world that is clearly more multicultural, unsettled and complex than that of their predecessors.”⁹

5.7 Other studies on young Australians aged 16 to 40 years revealed that young Australians of all backgrounds are more comfortable with cultural diversity and engage with their multicultural world in much more interactive ways than older generations. Young people also appear to have less absolutist conceptions of ethnic categories and more fluid identities that are highly dependent on the context and situation.¹⁰

⁶ State Government of Victoria, *Future directions: an action agenda for young Victorians*, Melbourne, State of Victoria. p 13

⁷ Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), op. cit., p 18

⁸ Vasta, E 1995, ‘Youth and ethnicity: the second generation’, in *Ethnic minority youth in Australia*, C Guerra & R White (eds), Hobart, National Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, 55-67.

⁹ Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria (ECCV), op. cit., p 20

¹⁰ *ibid*, p 22

5.8 It would appear that identity with their Maltese heritage may not be the real problem for the younger generations of Maltese-Australians. In fact, it is very encouraging to note a lot of young people of Maltese background have no difficulty and are, in fact, quite proud to acknowledge their Maltese heritage. This pride in their heritage can be seen from the following facts:

- the large number of applicants for Maltese citizenship and Maltese passports since the amendments to the Maltese nationality laws about ten years ago that permitted dual citizenship. In this context, it is of considerable concern that the current waiting period of 18 months for the processing of citizenship applications may be counter productive to the constant encouragement of Maltese youth to avail themselves of the opportunity to take up Maltese citizenship;
- the large crowd of young people of Maltese background attending the two *Made in Malta* social and entertainment events that were held in Melbourne in May 2009 and January 2010 and the interest that they showed in popular Maltese music and songs remixed and played at the events, the most recent event featuring three prominent DJs from Malta (Joven Grech and Cyprian Cassar more known as ‘Tenishia’, Miss Roberta, and DJ Ruby);
- the number of young people of Maltese background who are travelling to Malta. It is an exception rather than the rule that these young people visiting Europe from Australia would not include a visit to Malta. Once they reach Malta, (something that Edwina Mallia experienced first-hand while leading the Malta Discovery Tours), they go out of their way to visit the village or town of their parents’ birth and look up their relatives whom they have never heard from or met before.

5.9 Born in Australia of a Maltese father and an Australian mother, a young Maltese-Australian who did not wish to be identified, was interviewed for the purpose of this paper. In response to a question about her identify, she expressed her view as follows:

“I identify myself as half Maltese and half Australian. The Maltese part of my identity came from my father who is Maltese and I know he is proud to be Maltese and it was something that we were told to be proud of. At school I was always proud to say that I was half Maltese and I think we had a huge exposure to the Maltese culture through dad and we couldn’t help but know what it was

to be Maltese. Everyone recognises my surname as Maltese. When I say my name, particularly as a professional, they ask me if it is Maltese and I'll say yes it is and my father is Maltese. The Maltese community is readily identifiable in Australia.”

- 5.10 Youth interest in the Maltese language appears to be fading. When asked why the younger generations are not learning the Maltese language but still chose to attend to an event such as *Made in Malta*, the young organiser Joey Vella acknowledged that “unfortunately the Maltese language is dying down. You do get a few Maltese youth who do talk [the language] here and there, but it is mainly all in English now.”¹¹
- 5.11 There are no Australian schools that offer Maltese language as a subject in the mainstream curriculum. It is quite surprising that Maltese parents have not pressured principals of schools located in areas where there is a sizeable number of students of Maltese background about the failure to provide Maltese language classes at those schools. Several schools in the western suburbs of Melbourne, where many Maltese reside, offer Italian and Asian languages as part of the school curriculum. The MCCV has never been approached by Maltese parents to support the teaching of Maltese in these schools, despite encouraging them to do so. In the not too distant past, the MCCV was successful in campaigning for Maltese teacher aids to be appointed to schools in the western region.
- 5.12 Despite the fact that it is advantageous to students of Maltese background from an educational point of view in studying Maltese, in the sense that they get credited with additional points in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) for taking up a foreign language, currently the future of the Maltese Language as a recognised VCE subject is under threat, as it has been a struggle to obtain the minimum level of fifteen students sitting for the relevant examination Australia-wide on an annual basis.
- 5.13 Youth participation in the thirty-six Maltese Associations currently affiliated with the MCCV and others is basically non-existent, as all executive and general members are of advanced age and seem to have an insurmountable difficulty recruiting or encouraging younger people to join. It is significant that no leader or executive member of the MCCV

¹¹ SBS Radio, Interview on the Maltese Program, Melbourne, broadcast on 11 January 2010

and affiliated associations have succeeded in encouraging their children to be involved in the community with a view to them ultimately taking up a leadership role.

5.14 Apart from the obvious age and generation gap problem, the older generation typically expects all committee meetings to be conducted in the Maltese language, although generally meetings are bilingual. Such an expectation alienates the younger generation, who often cannot speak the language at all or lack confidence in speaking it. Thus, the lack of knowledge of, or fluency in, the Maltese language often becomes another insurmountable hurdle for the younger people.

5.15 Another reason why young people are not getting involved in the Maltese community is that the MCCV offers nothing that is of interest to young people. In the words of a young Maltese-Australian,

“if you have a Diabetes Night, you are not going to get any 24 year olds to Diabetes Night. But I don’t know what you can do because I think you lost them already. Bingo is the other thing that is offered. The younger people that are being encouraged to get involved have tertiary education and sometimes the expectation of what we want the community to deliver to us is very different from, say, the average community centre user. There needs to be something more than Bingo to entertain people.”

5.16 The future of the Maltese religious traditions in Australia is starting to look rather bleak. It would probably not come as a surprise to many that the likelihood is that the patron saint celebrations (‘festas’) will cease to exist once the first generation passes away. At such functions, one rarely sees Maltese youths attending as they see no relevance of such traditions to their lifestyle.

5.17 The lack of Maltese youth participation is not just in the religious festivities and processions with the statue of the patron saint, but also in the related social activities organised for the Maltese community, such as, the ‘festa balls’. According to the young organiser of *Made in Malta* social entertainment event, Joey Vella, “in terms of dinner dances and ‘bandas’ and ‘festas’, times are really changing. Unfortunately having those types of traditions they are quite good, but especially with the Maltese youth now they are

not really into it. In terms of today's culture, they are not into the older types of festivities. There are new festivities that they are interested in.”¹²

5.18 Without the engagement of youth, the future of the Maltese culture and language in Australia is at great risk. If the first generation accepts responsibility for not keeping up with the younger generations and is able to come up with better ideas “thinking outside the square” to engage them, the hope is that there would be enough of them, given their numbers, who would be interested in gradually taking over leadership. If people are proud of their background, the last thing they would want to see happen is to see the Maltese culture disappear. In fact, it is not unusual for young people to seek to engage with the community at a later stage in their life.

5.19 In Australia we have not had any professional and specially qualified teachers of the Maltese language. The language has been taught by volunteers who teach it because they are proud of, and love, the Maltese language and culture. The future of the language in Australia heavily depends on assistance from the Malta Government. Appropriate support and funding is required and professional teachers would need to be made available to schools which are prepared to offer Maltese in their curriculum. Two schools in Melbourne who used to offer Maltese language classes, namely, St Monica's in the suburb of Epping and St Bernadette's in North Sunshine, had to discontinue them due to a lack of teachers and resources. The only organisations offering Maltese language classes are the MCCV and the Saturday School of Community Languages.

5.20 One of the MCCV affiliated organisations, the Maltese Literature Group, which has the promotion of the Maltese language as its principal objective, has no young people represented on their executive or membership.

6 A New Approach to Engaging of Maltese-Australian Youth

6.1 Times have changed but the Maltese community is still socialising in ways that have not changed for decades. New ways of engaging youth need to be found and implemented with some urgency.

¹² SBS Radio, *ibid.*

- 6.2 It is suggested that one of the key reasons why younger generations of Maltese-Australians do not attend social events organised for the Maltese community is the traditional form of entertainment used at these functions, namely, dinner dances and balls. This format is totally foreign to the younger generations of today who view it as “the old way” of socialising and entertainment.
- 6.3 Today’s youth are very ‘tech savvy’ and have become very dependent on their mobile phones, iPods and PCs for their entertainment and socialising needs. They use social networking sites on the internet, such as, *MySpace*, *Facebook* and *Twitter* as their primary means of organising social events, issuing invitations to the next social gathering to their mates and making new friends.
- 6.4 One event that was widely publicised on such social networking websites was the *Made in Malta* event for youths of Maltese backgrounds and their friends regardless of their ethnic origin. The event was first held in May 2009 with a large attendance of youth of Maltese ancestry and the participation of prominent Maltese DJs. On the night about 1,600 people attended. A repeat event was held in Melbourne in January 2010, when 1,200 people turned up. It is understood that the organisers intend to hold a similar event in Sydney later this year. The youth who attended the first event varied in age between 18 and 40 years. The night included some Maltese songs, Maltese flags, and Maltese drinks Cisk and your Kinnie.
- 6.5 The MCCV in Melbourne will have to ensure that Maltese youth should have regular and proper access to the Maltese Community Centre premises for the purpose of bringing together young people of similar interests.

7 Benefits of Youth Engagement to Youth, the Community and Malta

7.1 **Benefits to Youth.** The benefits of engagement to youth would include:

- An introduction to a tremendous culture with a long-standing and rich history that is admired around the world.
- These days it is ‘cool’ and fashionable to be proud of one’s background and to want to learn more about it. It gives them a lot of self-confidence and an opportunity for

personal growth discovering their background. This is readily apparent among the Greeks and the Italians, who appear to take their language and culture more seriously.

- Young people can benefit from social networks that can be established if they join Maltese community organisations.

7.2 Benefits to the Community. The most important benefit would be that the younger generation would gradually start taking over leadership in the community. This is very important to the future viability of the Maltese community, as there has been no succession planning to date. It would be a great relief to the first generation to know that young people are prepared to lend a hand and introduce new ideas for community benefit.

7.3 Benefits to Malta. The benefits of youth engagement to Malta would include:

- A greater interest generated among the younger generations of Maltese-Australians to travel to Malta would directly benefit the Maltese economy in terms of tourism. Visitors to Malta often encourage their friends, Maltese and others, to visit and, having experienced Malta first-hand, they are better able to persuade them to visit by relating more vividly and passionately about the rich history and natural beauty of the Maltese islands.
- Young Maltese-Australians, who are well established in their profession, could be encouraged to contribute their skills and experience in various professions to the Maltese economy by working in Malta for a few years to broaden their experience, similar to what many expatriate Australians of British ancestry do in the UK.
- Young people running their own business or holding an executive position in multi-national corporations might see Malta as a good opportunity to do business, resulting in an increase in trade between Malta and Australia. This could work both ways and provide contacts for Maltese businesses to export to Australia. It is encouraging to note that there are a number of young people in the leadership and membership of the Maltese-Australian Business and Professional Association of Victoria, which provides networking opportunities among business and professional people within the Maltese-Australian community in Victoria.

- Young Maltese-Australian entrepreneurs may wish to enter into new business ventures in Malta in partnership with their counterparts in Malta, leading to new investments that benefit the Maltese economy.

8 Recommendations

- 8.1 It is clear from the above analysis of the issues relating to the lack of engagement by young Maltese-Australian that the MCCV has in the past relied too heavily on the Malta-born first generation and, maybe, partly on the second generation to lead the Maltese community. It is obvious that it did not keep up with the needs and tastes of the younger generations and nothing that the MCCV has offered has been sufficiently attractive or relevant to them. It is essential that the MCCV, as a matter of priority, offer new opportunities to Maltese youth in Melbourne that are relevant and appropriate to them.
- 8.2 In order to address this situation, the following are some recommendations to generate interest among the younger Maltese-Australians in Maltese language, culture and engage them in Maltese community life:
- 8.3 **That** an MCCV Youth Committee be established that would be independent of the MCCV Council. Initially members on the Youth Committee would be nominated or, at least encouraged, by Council to nominate for Committee positions. Every affiliated association would be approached to see if they are able to nominate a young member of their association to be on the Youth Committee. The idea behind this would be to encourage them to learn about Maltese community structures and ultimately the possibility of taking on responsibility for community leadership. The MCCV would welcome representatives from the Youth Committee on its Executive.
- 8.4 **That** the MCCV consider providing a new information service to the younger generations regarding short-term employment opportunities available in Malta and within the EU for those interested in spending time on the island while doing some paid work. Assistance would be sought from the Government of Malta to set up such a service in conjunction with the Employment and Training Corporation, the government agency in Malta. The service could also cover opportunities available in other member states of the European

Union that may be suitable. Such a service would provide youth with a reference point for job opportunities that are linked in some way with Malta and its EU member status.

- 8.5 **That** a webpage that is being established on the highly popular social networking *Facebook* website under the name of *Maltese Heritage* (rather than the MCCV Council) be passed on to be entirely managed by a couple of young people of Maltese background who are interested in doing so and are familiar with the workings of this new networking tool. Members of the *Maltese Heritage* group would be able to invite their friends to join the group by sending them the link to this website.
- 8.6 **That** the University of Malta consider establishing the Student Exchange Program with Australian tertiary institutions in order to attract young Maltese-Australian students to study in Malta for some time. This could take the form of an inter-university arrangement between the University of Malta and other corresponding tertiary education institutions in Australia. One such agreement is currently in place between the University of Malta and Victoria University in Melbourne with long-established links and teacher exchanges. This recommendation envisages that students of Maltese background would be able to complete a semester of studies in Malta, which would be recognised as satisfying the relevant part of the requirements of the course being undertaken at the Australian institution.
- 8.7 **That** more scholarships be offered by the Government of Malta for students of Maltese background to study in Malta. The MCCV in conjunction with the Government of Malta could also offer awards at schools and universities in Australia in order to raise the profile of the Maltese community locally. At least two associations affiliated with the MCCV have, over the last three years, sponsored awards to students attending Maltese language classes at the Saturday School of Community Languages and at the Maltese Community Centre in Parkville. The MCCV has agreed to make an award to a student on the Malta Discovery Tour achieving the highest score in their trip related assignment.
- 8.8 **That** young Maltese-Australians be provided with an opportunity of travelling to Malta in organised tours. The objective would be to encourage young people of Maltese background to include Malta in their holiday trips overseas. The Government of Malta could assist in such an initiative by offering Malta travel packages for young people that may include subsidised accommodation, complimentary entry to historical places of interest, and

providing information about visiting Malta that is specifically targeted to young travellers. This initiative would offer young people, who may be unwilling to venture off on their own, the opportunity to feel more comfortable travelling with other young people with a similar background. Through the Malta Discovery Tours, which is in its fourth year, the MCCV has gained experience in organising such tours. Consideration could be given to running similar tours over the Christmas holiday period for young people who are undergoing tertiary education to make it more convenient and attractive to them.

8.9 **That** the MCCV consider the establishment of an annual reception at the Maltese Community Centre in recognition of the achievements of young Maltese-Australians who have successfully completed their VCE exams. A similar reception could also be organised for new graduates of Maltese background from the various universities in Victoria.

8.10 **That**, as part of the Maltese Cultural Calendar each year, the MCCV sponsor a youth ‘arts and music’ event to be held in an appropriate venue to highlight young Maltese talent. This event should become an important social occasion for young people to meet others of the same background and interests. The MCCV should also offer its centre as a venue for young Maltese to exhibit their works of art on a regular basis.

8.11 **That** the Malta Government encourage and facilitate opportunities for young Maltese artists living overseas to exhibit their work in Malta.

8.12 **That** the MCCV consider having an information stand at careers fairs or expos for prospective students of Maltese background at the relevant university. This would give them an opportunity of becoming familiar with the work of the MCCV and its affiliated associations. It may also provide an opportunity to encourage the students to form their own university club, as is often done by students of other ethnic backgrounds, such as, Italian and Greek.

The authors acknowledge that these recommendations contained in this Paper are intended to generate an informed debate and feel certain that there will be many other suggestions that can be taken up from the discussions at the Convention.