

# Italian Australians



The Italian flag

Italy has been one of the most important sources for Australian migrants, with many coming to Australia after World War II. Nearly 200 000 people living in Australia today were born in Italy, and more than 850 000 identify themselves as having Italian ancestry. This timeline shows that Italian involvement in Australia dates back much further.

1770	On board Captain Cook's ship the <i>Endeavour</i> was Italian seaman Antonio Ponto. He was probably the first Italian to land in Australia.
1800-1810	A small number of Italian prisoners were transported from Britain to the penal colony in New South Wales.
1840s	Italian missionaries sailed to Australia to convert Aboriginal people to Christianity.
1850s	The gold rushes brought a large number of Italians to Australia seeking their fortune. Raffaello Carboni was one of the leaders of the 1854 Eureka Stockade.
1881	Approximately 2000 Italian migrants were living in Australia.
1882	A group of Italians founded a settlement at New Italy, near Woodburn in northern NSW, after leaving a failed settlement in New Guinea. About 40 families made a living producing silk and salami and felling trees.
1891	About 4000 Italians were living in Victoria. Italians also began arriving in North Queensland to work in the sugar industry.
1920s	Most sugar cane growers in North Queensland were Italian.
1921	More Italians came to Australia as the US Government cut immigration from Italy. Between 1921 and 1933 the number of Italian people in Australia trebled.
1939	Italy joined World War II as an ally of Germany. Migration stopped, and some of the 40 000 Italians living in Australia were arrested and forced to live in prison camps. Most of these were men, and their wives and families often suffered hardship as a result.
1939-1945	During World War II, it is estimated that over 18 000 Italian prisoners of war were brought to Australia from the battlefields of Europe. They were kept in camps around the country. Some were allowed to work on neighbouring farms, and a number of them stayed on to live in Australia after the war ended.
1946	Post World War II, the government began a large-scale immigration program that targeted people from Britain as well as people from Europe who had been left homeless by the war. This included large numbers of Italians.
1950s	Poor economic conditions in Italy prompted more Italians to move to Australia, where they found work on farms and in factories. Many went to North Queensland to work in the sugar industry, as they had in the 1890s.
1961-1971	The number of Italian-born residents grew from 228 296 to 660 000.
1970-1980	Improved economic conditions in Italy and higher unemployment in Australia slowed Italian migration, except a small number who migrated to join family members already in Australia.

