

# Struggles ahead for ageing Italian migrants in Australia

June 6 2016

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With half of Australia's 185,000-strong Italian migrant population now over 65, issues concerning aged care, including access to services, are becoming more pressing for the Italian community, a new book says.

[Ageing between Cultures: The experiences and challenges of Italian migrants in South Australia](#) was launched recently by Ms Zoe Bettison, the State Minister for Ageing and Minister for Multicultural Affairs.

Edited by Flinders senior lecturer in Humanities, Dr Daniela Rose, the book brings together academics from a range of fields to identify the problems and needs faced by the ageing Italian population in South Australia.

Language barriers constitute a major challenge, Dr Rose says, and census figures for South Australia show more than a third of Italian [migrants](#) over 65 are not proficient in English, with the proportion rising to almost half among women.

Dr Rose said that despite the assimilationist policy of the 1950s and 1960s when many Italians arrived in Australia, not all migrants had the opportunity to learn adequate English, a factor which, together with the closeness of Italian families and communities that has subsequently limited their exposure to English, means the language issue has followed the migrant cohort as they age.

With many government agencies and private providers increasing their

use of web-based access to services and information, elderly migrants can be doubly disadvantaged by the language barrier and unfamiliar technology.

"These days the services are there, but sometimes they can't be accessed," Dr Rose said.

She said the effect can be multiplied by factors such as dialects and the lack of Italian-speaking staff in nursing homes, even in ethno-specific homes.

With the strong Italian emphasis on family ties, Ms Rose said aged Italians traditionally rely on their adult children to act as translators, to mediate with health and care providers, and to provide transport.

The growing policy approach of maintaining the elderly in their homes sits well with the central role of the home in Italian culture, Dr Rose says, but it also requires the provision of appropriate support services for carers.

"The important thing is to give a voice to the ageing migrants and to the [adult children](#) who look after them," Dr Rose said.

Provided by Flinders University

Citation: Struggles ahead for ageing Italian migrants in Australia (2016, June 6) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-06-struggles-ageing-italian-migrants-australia.html>

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