



Com.It.Es.
Comitato degli Italiani all'Estero
South Australia

1st October 2021

Save Italian at Flinders University

Dear Italian Community Leaders,

As you may be aware there has been a recent announcement at Flinders University to close the teaching of Italian.

Com.It.Es South Australia is deeply concerned about this decision to cut the teaching of Italian, given that the Italian community is still one of the largest ethnic group in South Australia and is the largest non-English language spoken in South Australian homes (Census 2016).

The Italian community has played a rich and integral role in the South Australian community and many of our family success stories have built this country into the beautiful nation we now call home. However, we Italians still remain linked to our cultural identity, and the decision to stop the teaching of Italian in a state that has over 120,000 Italian-Australians living in South Australia as the largest ethnic group is a disrespectful move that stops our children and grandchildren to learn Italian and connect to their culture.

Italian is the fourth most studied language in the world, and Italy is one of Australia's major trading partners. Two-way goods and services trade between Australia and Italy are valued at \$11.1 billion (\$383 million in South Australia. Source: DFAT 2020), with a recent wave of investment by Italian companies in South Australia due to the growing space sector. These facts alone, show how important it is to continue to promote and teach Italian in our schools and universities, and we feel that the decision by the Flinders University needs to be reversed and the Italian language department re-instated for the continual promotion of Italian language and culture, and the ability for our future generations to have access to learn Italian and connect to their rich culture.

Com.It.Es has organised an online petition in the attempt to show Flinders University just how important the teaching of Italian is to the local community and we strongly encourage you to circulate the online link from our facebook page on your social media platforms and wider networks to gain as many signatures as possible so we can present this to the university shortly. We also strongly recommend that you write to your local MP and highlight the importance you and your local communities feel about this decision as they too can play a part in advocating to the university to further help our cause.

Com.It.Es South Australia
(Committee for Italians Abroad)
The Italian Centre - 262a Carrington St, Adelaide 5000
Web: www.sacomites.org.au
Email: info@sacomites.org.au


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If your organisation or association requires a hard-copy of the petition please see below a hard-copy version of the petition for your use which can be printed and used immediately. Once you have completed getting signatures please feel free to scan and email them back to us, or alternatively post them to our office.

We cannot stress enough how important this is for our Italian community to unite for a common good, and we would be thankful for your support in this matter to save the teaching of Italian at Flinders University.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Un caro saluto,



Dr Christian Verdicchio
President Com.It.Es South Australia

Ps. The link for our online petition is www.change.org/Save-Italian-At-FlindersUni

Keep Italian open at Flinders University!

**Com.It.Es South Australia has started this petition to
Prof. Colin Stirling, Vice-Chancellor and President of Flinders University**

Italian Studies is being terminated at Flinders University “due to ongoing low student numbers”. The signatories resolutely ask Flinders University Vice Chancellor and President Prof. Stirling to reverse this proposal, considering that:

- Over 1 million Australian citizens have an Italian background. Over 160.000 Italian citizens live in Australia;
- Italian is the most common non-English language spoken in South Australian homes (29,106 speakers, data: [2016 Census](#)). If implemented, the closing of Italian at Flinders University would inevitably cause negative reactions within the community;
- Italian is the fourth most studied language in the world (source: [iitaly.org](#) 2019);
- Italy is one of Australia’s major trading partners. Two-way goods and services trade between Australia and Italy are valued at \$11.1 billion (\$383 million in South Australia. Source: [DFAT 2020](#));
- Italy is a valuable source of foreign direct investment in Australia, totalling AU\$4.5 billion in 2020 (source: [infomercatiesteri.it](#) 2021);
- 217 Italian companies have a direct and stable presence in Australia ([Italian Trade Agency](#) 2021);
- Australian companies have major projects being developed in Italy.
 - Lendlease is the winning developer, with a 99 year concession of the former Milano World EXPO area. This zero-emission project is Lendlease’s largest outside of Australia on a global scale;
- Several Italian companies have established business operations in South Australia in growing high-tech sectors such as aero spatial industry (Leonardo, SITAEL), home automation (Nice), and renewable energies (Enel).
- Health and aged care are sectors where Italian speakers are urgently needed.
 - Culturally appropriate care is crucial, in these sensitive sectors where it is widely acknowledged the quality of service needs to improve;
- The discipline of Italian Studies was established in South Australia at Flinders University 50 years ago with the support and funding of the Italian community via the Dante Alighieri Society of S.A., and has been taught since the 1980s at the University of Adelaide via the Flinders Languages Outreach Program. Good corporate citizenship (and community goodwill) would be enhanced by engaging with the community before such a drastic decision;



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South Australia

- There are options to collaborate with the community in order to increase enrolment numbers in Italian, building on a potential of about 31,000 students (total number of students of Italian in South Australian primary and secondary schools in 2020). For instance, it could be possible to promote closer partnerships between university, schools and Italian enterprises;
- “Low student numbers” is a partial and misleading interpretation of the actual facts: approximately 120 students were enrolled in Italian Language and Culture courses in Semester 1 and approximately 80 are enrolled in Semester 2 this year, either directly or cross-institutionally.
- Many of the students served are majoring in other disciplines (Education, Business, International Studies, Law, and STEM disciplines), therefore Italian Studies is a strong contributor to boosting the interdisciplinary skills and employability of future graduates. Nevertheless, Italian Studies is the only discipline proposed for disestablishment;
- The disestablishment of Italian at Flinders University would negatively affect the employability and skills of future teachers as well as the long-term teaching quality of Italian to a cohort of 31,000 students in South Australian primary and secondary schools;
- The philanthropic Cassamarca Foundation has contributed over AU\$200,000 in the last 10 years to Flinders University to support teaching and research in Italian Studies;
- The Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation is a regular financial supporter of Italian Studies at Flinders University;
- The disestablishment of a foreign language in a Higher Education institution is a major loss for a proudly multicultural society like Australia.
- The proposal to disestablish Italian at Flinders University in the 50th anniversary of its establishment, the Year of Dante Alighieri (700th anniversary of his passing) and close to the XXI Week of Italian Language in the World (18-24 October) shows a profound lack of respect for the Italian community at large.

Please SIGN THIS PETITION to let Prof. Stirling know that you DO NOT AGREE with the closing of Italian at Flinders University.

If you wish to sign online please visit
www.change.org/Save-Italian-At-FlindersUni

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Tenete aperto l'Italiano alla Flinders University!

Il Com.It.Es (Comitato degli Italiani all' Estero) ha avviato una petizione al Professor Colin Stirling, Rettore e Presidente della Flinders University via Change.org

Italianistica sta per essere chiusa alla Flinders University “a causa del continuo numero ridotto di studenti”. I firmatari chiedono risolutamente al rettore e presidente Professor Stirling di fare retromarcia, considerando che:

- Gli australiani di origine italiana sono oltre un milione e più di 160.000 cittadini italiani vivono in Australia;
- L'italiano è la lingua più parlata dopo l'inglese nelle case dell'Australia meridionale (29.106 parlanti, dati Censimento 2016);
- L'Italia è uno dei principali partner commerciali dell'Australia. Il commercio bilaterale di beni e servizi fra l'Australia e l'Italia ha un valore di 11,1 miliardi di dollari (di cui 383 milioni nell'Australia Meridionale. Fonte: [DFAT 2020](#));
- L'Italia è una fonte preziosa di investimenti esteri diretti in Australia, per un totale di 4,5 miliardi di dollari nel 2020 (fonte: [infomercatiesteri](#) 2021);
- 217 aziende italiane hanno una presenza diretta e stabile in Australia ([Italian Trade Agency](#) 2021);
- Ci sono società australiane con importanti progetti in fase di realizzazione in Italia:
 - Per esempio, il costruttore Lendlease ha ottenuto un appalto di 99 anni per sviluppare un Progetto a emissioni zero nell'area dell'ex Expo di Milano. Si tratta del più grande progetto a emissioni zero che Lendlease sta sviluppando su scala globale al di fuori dell'Australia;
- Diverse società italiane hanno stabilito operazioni commerciali e/o produttive in Australia Meridionale in settori high-tech in crescita, come l'industria aerospaziale (Leonardo, SITAEL), domotica (Nice) ed energie rinnovabili (Enel);
- La sanità pubblica e la cura degli anziani sono settori con urgente necessità di reclutare personale che parla italiano:
 - L'offerta di cure culturalmente appropriate è cruciale in questi settori che notoriamente hanno bisogno di miglie;
- La disciplina di Italianistica fu avviata nell'Australia meridionale alla Flinders University 50 anni fa con il supporto e i fondi della comunità italiana tramite la Società Dante Alighieri del South Australia, ed è stata insegnata all'Università di Adelaide dagli anni '80 tramite il Flinders University Outreach Program. Una buona cittadinanza d'impresa (e buona volontà

- comunitaria) verrebbe ulteriormente migliorata interagendo con la comunità prima di prendere una decisione così drastica;
- Ci sono opzioni per collaborare con la comunità allo scopo di aumentare il numero di iscrizioni in Italianistica, lavorando sul potenziale di circa 31.000 studenti di italiano nelle scuole primarie e secondarie dell’Australia meridionale (dati 2020). Per esempio, si potrebbe promuovere una più stretta collaborazione fra l’università, le scuole e il mondo imprenditoriale italiano;
 - Un “basso numero di studenti” è un’interpretazione parziale e fuorviante dei fatti reali: circa 120 studenti erano iscritti a corsi di lingua e cultura italiana nel primo semestre, e circa 80 vi sono iscritti nel secondo semestre del corrente anno, sia direttamente, sia in forma inter-istituzionale;
 - Molti degli studenti serviti sono iscritti a corsi di laurea in altre discipline (Scienze dell’Educazione, Economia, Studi Internazionali, Giurisprudenza, discipline scientifiche e tecnologiche), pertanto Italianistica ha un ruolo importante nel sostenere le capacità interdisciplinari e l’idoneità professionale dei laureandi. Ciononostante, Italianistica è l’unica disciplina per cui è stata proposta la chiusura;
 - L’eliminazione dell’Italianistica alla Flinders University avrebbe ripercussioni negative sull’idoneità professionale e le capacità dei futuri insegnanti di italiano a una coorte di 31.000 studenti nelle scuole primarie e secondarie dell’Australia meridionale;
 - La Fondazione filantropica Cassamarca ha versato oltre 200.000 dollari negli ultimi 10 anni alla Flinders University per sostenere l’insegnamento e la ricerca in Italianistica;
 - Il Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale è un regolare sostenitore finanziario di Italianistica alla Flinders University;
 - L’italiano è la quarta lingua più studiata nel mondo (fonte: iitaly.org 2019);
 - L’eliminazione di una lingua straniera in un istituto universitario è una grave perdita per una società orgogliosamente multiculturale come quella australiana;
 - La proposta di chiudere Italianistica alla Flinders University nel cinquantesimo anniversario della sua introduzione, nell’anno di Dante Alighieri (700mo anniversario della sua morte) e a pochi giorni dalla XXI Settimana della Lingua Italiana nel Mondo (18-24 ottobre) dimostra una profonda mancanza di rispetto per la comunità italiana in generale.

Per cortesia, FIRMATE QUESTA PETIZIONE per far sapere al Prof. Stirling che NON SIETE D’ACCORDO con la chiusura di Italianistica alla Flinders University.

Keep Italian open at Flinders University! - Hard copy petition

Name of collecting organisation _____

Signatories / Firmatari

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