

‘Undesirable Italians’: prolegomena for a history of the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta in Australia

Stephen Bennetts*

Australian ‘Ndrangheta Research Group, University College London

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Although Italian mafia scholars have recently been turning their attention to the Calabrian mafia (known as the ‘Ndrangheta) diaspora in Australia, their efforts have been limited by conducting research remotely from Italy without the benefit of local knowledge. Australian journalists and crime writers have long played an important role in documenting ‘Ndrangheta activities, but have in turn been limited by a lack of expertise in Italian language and culture, and knowledge of the Italian scholarly literature. As previously in the US, Australian scholarly discussion of the phenomenon has been inhibited, especially since the 1970s, by a ‘liberal progressive’ ‘negationist’ discourse, which has led to a virtual silence within the local scholarly literature. This paper seeks to break this silence by bringing the Italian scholarly and Australian journalistic and archival sources into dialogue, and summarising the clear evidence for the presence in Australia since the early 1920s of criminal actors associated with a well-organised criminal secret society structured along lines familiar from the literature on the ‘Ndrangheta.

Keyword: Australian; ‘Ndrangheta; Italian organised crime in Australia; Italian mafias in Australia; mafia migration; ‘Ndrangheta

The Mafia doesn’t exist in Australia. There’s a friendship and bond between Italians who came here from the old country ... they go to funerals and weddings, and show a lot of respect. Some Italians in the community are very influential; if there’s a problem, you talk to them and they rectify it. But it’s not the Mafia. (Italo-Australian Melbourne underworld celebrity Mick Gatto, in Gatto and Noble 2010, 294f)

Introduction

‘Undesirable Italians’ is the title of an Australian Department of Immigration file recording details of Italians criminals active in Far North Queensland in the 1930s, with a view to their deportation, and highlights a controversial aspect of Australia’s Italian migration history. Despite clear evidence for the activities in Australia since the early twentieth century of criminal actors associated with an organised Calabrian criminal secret society or network known successively as ‘Camorra’, ‘Black Hand Society’, ‘Mafia’, ‘Honoured Society’ and ‘Ndrangheta’, Australian and other anglo-phone scholars have tended to deny the organisation’s existence, play down its significance, or else avoid the topic altogether (Henderson 1995; Richards 2011; McCoy 1980; 1986, 266f; Jenkins 1989;

*Email: s.bennetts@ucl.ac.uk

Douglas 1995, 220–234; White and White 1993). Recently, there has been intense international scholarly focus on the phenomenon of ‘mafia migration’ to the US (Paoli, 2003; Varese 2013; Lupo 2008), Canada (Schneider 2009), Northern Europe (Forgione 2010; Sciarrone and Storti 2014), Northern and Central Italy (Varese 2013; Sciarrone 2014) and South America (Varese 2013; Forgione 2010). Yet no Australian scholar has so far seriously addressed the history of the ‘Ndrangheta diaspora in Australia, thus leaving the field almost exclusively to Italian scholars (Minuti and Nicaso 1994, 103–131; Ciconte and Macrì 2009; Sergi 2012; 2014; Spagnolo 2010; Forgione 2010).¹

By contrast, Australian journalists and crime writers have played a central role since the 1930s in documenting and exposing the activities of what has been dubbed the ‘Australian ‘Ndrangheta’² (Harvey 1948; Bottom 1979; 1988; Campbell et al. 1992; Moor 2009; McLaren 2011; Small and Gilling 2010; 2011; Madigan 2013; Whitton 1993 and others). Yet from a narrower scholarly point of view, much of this body of literature has obvious shortcomings, not only because of its sometimes sensationalist tone (e.g. Harvey 1948; Silvester and Rule 2004; Marrett 2005), the frequent lack of source citations and bibliography, but also because these researchers often lack any direct knowledge of Italy, Calabria, their respective languages and cultures, or familiarity with a growing body of international scholarly work on the three principal Southern Italian mafias: the Calabrian ‘Ndrangheta, Sicilian Mafia and Campanian Camorra.

The Italian mafia scholars cited above have recently begun contextualising this ‘Australian ‘Ndrangheta’ within the network’s cultural origins and ongoing links to Calabria, its distinctive organisational structure and traditions, and its current function within a powerful and expanding global network. Yet these Italian scholars have in turn been disadvantaged by conducting research on Australia remotely, using available bibliographical and internet resources, without direct experience or local knowledge of the Australian context.

These two divergent bodies of literature urgently need to be brought into dialogue and synthesis. In this article, I attempt to bridge this transnational divide by outlining evidence in Australia since at least 1922 for the continuity of structure and regular processes of succession within a well-organised network based on the traditional Calabrian criminal secret society model. Making sense of the Australian data of course also requires bringing to bear insights from a third major body of literature: recent Italian and international research highlighting the general nature and comparative history of the three principal Southern Italian mafias (Ciconte 1992; 1996; 2011; Dickie 2011; 2013; Gratteri and Nicaso 2010; 2011; 2013; Paoli 2003; Truzzolillo 2011; 2014). In particular, recent research in Northern and Central Italy (Sciarrone 2014) and Germany (Sciarrone and Storti 2014) provides rich empirical data and a convincing theoretical problematisation of the phenomenon of mafia expansion from ‘traditional mafia areas’ such as some parts of Calabria into ‘non-traditional areas’ such as Australia. This evidence suggests that, except in a few specific instances (such as limited areas of central Melbourne), mafia groups find it difficult to achieve ‘settlement’ (*radicamento*) in a new territory, or to exercise the kind of *controllo del territorio* associated with the home territory (‘power syndicate’), but instead typically engage in a process of ‘infiltration’ to pursue activities primarily of an economic nature, both legal and illegal (‘enterprise syndicate’). In Germany, Northern and Central Italy, ‘Ndrangheta groups maintain strong links to the mother *locale* in Calabria, yet mafia groups elsewhere (cf. Lupo 2008 for the US) have acquired local autonomy over time and developed along more local lines, in what Sciarrone terms ‘the hybridisation model’. Although available empirical data for Australia is still very scarce, there is evidence to suggest the maintenance of strong links over time between ‘Ndrangheta *locali* in Australia and the Calabrian homeland, in line with Sciarrone’s findings for Germany and Northern and Central Italy, and in contrast to the US model.

‘Sensationalism’ vs ‘negationism’

In attempting to reconstruct a history of the ‘Australian ’Ndrangheta’, we face the same epistemological dilemma identified by Sicilian historian Salvatore Lupo in the US, where public discussion of the mafia has been played out between opposing extremes of ‘sensationalism’ and ‘negationism’. Journalists, Hollywood, aspiring politicians, police and criminal prosecutors have sometimes sensationalised the mafia threat for instrumental ends, inflating it into a ‘vast conspiracy’ associated with the paranoid ‘nativist’ notion of an alien menace which threatens to contaminate the purity of native values (Lupo 2008, 160f).

It would certainly be a mistake to assume that *’ndranghetisti* in Australia have ever achieved the level of social, political and economic penetration witnessed in contemporary Italy or in the US and Canada during the Prohibition and early post-war periods. In 1970s Sydney ‘by far the most powerful syndicate figures in Sydney [were] very much ... of English, Irish or Scottish origin, with names like Smith, Freeman, McPherson or Anderson’ (Jenkins 1989, 108). Alfred McCoy (1980, 298–308) found the focus of the 1979 Woodward Royal Commission into Drug Trafficking on a small group of Calabrian cannabis growers in the New South Wales (NSW) town of Griffith ludicrous, at the time of a national heroin epidemic promoted largely by non-Italian criminals.

Yet in a critique of the ‘negationist’ thesis, John Dickie (2011, 2013) has demonstrated how denying or downplaying the very existence of the three Southern Italian mafias has often provided highly effective cover for their ongoing criminal activities. In one of many striking US parallels, Lupo (2008, 191–198) has also identified a ‘liberal progressivist’ variation on the negationist theme, in which, especially from the 1960s, Italian-American scholars and community leaders sought to deny or downplay the significance of Italian-American organised crime, and to highlight the dangers of singling out one ethnic group and unfairly criminalising an entire community. Using the analogy of the African-American civil rights movement and the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, Italian-American lobbyists were even successful in persuading New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller to issue a ban on the use of the words ‘Mafia’ and ‘Cosa Nostra’ in the 1970s. In Australia, the National Italian Australian Foundation has more recently used similar ‘anti-racist’ rhetoric to contest the allegedly ‘offensive’ use of the word ‘Mafia’ in Australian media reporting.³

As in Mark Aaron’s account (2001) of post-war immigration to Australia by alleged war criminals from Eastern Europe, the notion of an ‘Australian ’Ndrangheta’ threatens at times to destabilise the conventionally heroic narratives of Australia’s multicultural history which have been propounded (with the noblest of intentions) by Australian migration scholars. The same liberal progressive ‘negationism’ identified by Lupo has had a similar effect on Australian scholarship, evident in the virtual absence of a local scholarly literature on the topic. In their efforts to defend the honour of the Italo-Australian community, Australian studies of the inter-war Black Hand crime wave in North Queensland (Henderson 1995; Richards 2011; Douglas 1995) discount evidence for the existence of an organised Southern Italian criminal secret society, and often seem to interpret the ‘Black Hand scare’ as a paranoid reflection of Anglo-Australian racism towards Italian migrants. Gerardo Papalia’s account (2008) of celebrations in Melbourne and Calabria of the Festa della Montagna di Polsi is notable for the absence of any allusion to the festival’s central role within ’Ndrangheta cosmology (Gratteri and Nicaso 2013a, 11–18). In a recent Australian Institute of Criminology research paper, Shona Morrison (2002, 2) even makes the (counterfactual) claim that it is a ‘myth’ that ‘ethnicity is a valid dimension for describing organised crime’, despite the fact that Calabrian birth or at least ancestry has long been an

established criterion for 'Ndrangheta membership in Calabria, the US and Australia (Paoli 2003, 11, 90f; Woodward 1979).

Lupo (2002, 19) highlights a major cross-cultural contrast between the politics of mafia representation in Italy and the US which is equally relevant to the Australian situation:

[In Italy] we are used to considering discussion of the Mafia as something associated with the Left, while *not* talking about the Mafia is associated with the Right. [In Italy], it is those who challenge established power who see the demonic face of the Mafia behind the ruling classes. By contrast, in America, it is the conservatives who have traditionally adopted the term 'Mafia' to criminalise subaltern ethnic and social groups, while those who challenge the established order (which is of course official and Anglo-Saxon in character), have long opposed these kinds of attacks. In Italy, the Mafia is certainly not seen as an aspect of the labor movement, as it is in the US.

As in the US, mafia 'negationism' in Australia since the 1970s has been strongly associated with progressive cultural politics, no more so than under the reformist Whitlam Australian Labor Party (ALP) Government, which in 1972 abolished the notorious 'White Australia' policy and established 'multiculturalism' as official Government policy. The most influential exponent of mafia negationism in Australia has certainly been the late Al Grassby, Whitlam's highly engaging Minister for Immigration, often described as 'the father of Australian multiculturalism', and lionised by the Italian (Huber 1977) and many other ethnic communities in Australia for his undoubted achievements in transforming Australia into a more tolerant and inclusive society.

Yet there is also substantial evidence that Grassby provided political cover for the influential and well organised 'Ndrangheta cell identified in the 1979 Woodward Royal Commission in his electorate in the NSW town of Griffith (Small and Gilling 2010, 8–14; Moor 2009, 286–300). Here there is another compelling parallel with the US, where a similar convergence between the two separate 'liberal' and 'criminal' currents within 'negationist' discourse occurred through the establishment of the Italian-American Civil Rights League by New York mafia boss, Joe Colombo:

On March 20, 1971, the New York Times ran the front-page headline "Godfather' Film Won't Mention Mafia' ... Producer Al Ruddy of Paramount Pictures and Joe Colombo, founder of the Italian-American Civil Rights League, had agreed to strike the words 'Mafia' and 'Cosa Nostra' from the script of the film 'The Godfather'.

Colombo was the head of the Colombo crime family, who had nefariously appropriated the role of Italian-American leader and spokesperson. In exchange for script censorship, the intimidation, theft, and violence that had plagued pre-production and production ceased, and mob-controlled labor unions began cooperating with the filming. In addition, gangsters were cast as bit players and extras, and subsequently Hollywood actors began socializing with the criminals on the set. (Calandra 2014)

If the notion of an 'Ndrangheta presence remains a sensitive subject in Australian scholarly circles, the parallel debate among US migrationists appears to have moved on since the 1970s, as witnessed by the 2014 'Mafias: Representations and Realities' Conference held at New York's Calandra Italian-American Institute:

Given the historical association of Italian Americans with organized crime in the United States, it behooves us as scholars of Italian-American history and culture to tackle this subject with all the intellectual rigor of our various disciplinary insights ...

Those involved in Italy's anti-mafia movement ... have inspired people worldwide with their courageous strategies for confronting the silence and acquiescence that have existed for too long around criminal activities of this nature. 'Mafias', the Calandra conference, is in keeping with that sentiment of resistance, inasmuch as it aims to shine a light on heinous practices that many have chosen to wilfully ignore. (Calandra 2014)

The ‘Australian ’Ndrangheta’: the publicly available historical evidence

What then is the evidence for the presence in Australia of the Calabrian ’Ndrangheta, a local offshoot of what is now the most powerful and most ‘globalised’ of the three southern Italian mafias (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia 2013; Dickie 2013, 448–465) and the only one of these three criminal organisations known to have been significantly active in Australia? This study draws solely on published works and archival and news sources currently available online, while offline resources held in each Australian capital city have yet to be fully utilised.⁴

It has been argued that the Sicilian-dominated history of the US mob reflects patterns of migration from traditional Mafia zones in Western Sicily (Lupo 2008). By contrast, Sicilian immigration to Australia has been largely from the less-Mafia influenced areas of Eastern Sicily, while high levels of immigration from ’Ndrangheta-dominated areas in the province of Reggio Calabria, it has been argued, have instead favoured a virtual Calabrian monopoly on Italian organised crime in Australia (Ciconte and Macrì 2009, 3, 24; Sergi 2014). Forgione’s allusion (2010, 305–308) to activity by the Secondigliano Camorra clan in Sydney and Melbourne would seem a marginal and very recent development, while Chandler’s claim (1976, 198) that a Sicilian Mafia branch was established in Perth in the 1920s seems dubious. For very rare evidence of Sicilian involvement in inter-war Black Hand gangs led by Calabrians in North Queensland, see Harvey (1948). In a development unrelated to the ’Ndrangheta, leading non-Italian criminals in Sydney from the 1970s did facilitate investment in the local gaming industry by Sicilian-American members of the Chicago mob (Bottom 1979; McCoy 1980, 1986).

Federico Varese (2013) has argued that migration from traditional mafia areas is a key factor in successful ‘mafia transplantation’, yet migration from such areas is not a sufficient cause in itself, and successful ‘transplantation’ is instead influenced by a complex range of factors (Sciarrone 2014; Sciarrone and Storti 2014). A key question is whether Australian *’ndranghetisti* are criminals who emigrate, or migrants who become criminals in their new homeland. The available evidence tends to support the first hypothesis; the family origins of many persons associated with ’Ndrangheta activity in Australia can be traced to specific areas in the province of Reggio Calabria which have been historically dominated by the ’Ndrangheta, while there is also strong evidence for genealogical links between Australian *’ndranghetisti* with surnames such as Sergi, Romeo, Condello, Barbaro, Trimboli or Alvaro and homonymous clans still active to this day in this province.

A 1904 Australian press report describes alleged members of ‘the Mafia Secret Society’ being prevented from boarding a ship in Naples bound for Australia (*Launceston Examiner*, 9 February 1904), while early references to the ‘Camorra’ or ‘Black Hand’ clearly reflect the influence of news reports of US and Canadian ‘Black Hand’ activities. A later Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) report (Brown, 1965) records a kind of foundation myth of the Australian ’Ndrangheta, in which three *’ndranghetisti* arrive in Australia aboard the steamship *Re d’Italia* in December 1922. Domenico Strano goes on to found the Sydney branch, Antonio Barbara founds the Melbourne branch, while an unnamed third man goes on to found the Perth branch (Moor 2013; Ralph 2012).

Despite the quasi-mythological flavour of this narrative, which recalls the fictitious mafia narrative of the three *cavalieri spagnoli* said to have founded the Camorra, Mafia and ’Ndrangheta (Dickie 2011), shipping records from National Archives Australia (NAA)⁵ confirm that Strano and Barbara did indeed travel to Australia aboard the *Re d’Italia* in 1922, along with Angelo Macrì (Delianuova), the probable third man. At least two other *’ndranghetisti* were also on board: Domenico Belle (Palmi), later a leading light in the Sydney cell, and Giuseppe Bueti (Scilla), later deported for his involvement in Black Hand activities in North Queensland (Harvey 1948), and a

probable member of the leading 'Ndrangheta family of the time in Scilla and Solano. Antonio Barbara ('the Toad') subsequently acquired a significant criminal CV, and was later named as future Melbourne boss Domenico Italiano's main enforcer and debt collector (Rosengreen 1958). In early post-war Melbourne, we find him bribing two Department of Immigration officials to assist in an immigration scam bringing Calabrian associates into Australia, several with Italian criminal records (Cusack 1964).

From 1930 on, Australian public opinion was electrified by accounts of a 'Black Hand Society' active in North Queensland in extortions, murders and bombings, targeting members of the local Italian community along lines already familiar from pre-war US and Canada (Harvey 1948; Brown unpublished MS; Cordasco and Pitkin 1977; Schneider 2009; Lupo 2008). Yet in a familiar negationist move, Australian historians have tended to dismiss the notion of an organised Italian criminal secret society operating in inter-war North Queensland as the product of xenophobic conspiracy theory or journalistic sensationalism (Henderson 1995; Richards 2011) or downplayed evidence of organised criminal activity as merely a manifestation of the classic Southern Italian 'vendetta' (Douglas 1995). Yet the main historical source, Melbourne crime reporter John Harvey's 1948 *Black Hand Vengeance*, describes a well-integrated criminal network of Calabrians linking Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and North Queensland, with Black Handers travelling north for the cane season each year to run extortion and prostitution rackets. Harvey also presents familiar details of 'Ndrangheta ritual texts said to have been found in the possession of Calabrian Black Handers Francesco Femia and Vincenzo D'Agostino in North Queensland which would seem to support the existence of a criminal secret society organised along traditional lines (1948, 45f; cf Gratteri and Nicaso 2013; Ciconte and Macrì 2009). Fabio Truzzolillo, in a personal communication, has also established clear 'Ndrangheta connections for two Black Handers deported from North Queensland in the early 1930s: Giuseppe Bueti (see above) and Giuseppe Parisi (Sinopoli), appointed boss of the Sinopoli *locale* on his return to Calabria and later imprisoned for 'Ndrangheta activities. Two major Australian police reports (Rosengreen 1958; Cusack 1964) also assume an organisational unity between the 1930s Black Hand gangs and the post-war 'Honoured Society'.

Harvey's account also seems to be supported by evidence of an 'Ndrangheta branch operating in Sydney in the same period. Following the mysterious 1930 stabbing to death of Domenico Belle in Sydney, CIB Detective Sergeant Matthews (1931) reported discovering in the deceased's house the familiar ritual texts and extensive correspondence with members of a 'Camorra' or 'Evil Life' (Malavita) society in Melbourne, Brisbane, Griffith and other parts of NSW. Antonio Brando (Palmi) was identified from correspondence with Belle as leader of the Melbourne cell at the time. Matthews concluded that the Society's three principals in Sydney were Domenico Belle, Filippo Pignataro (Oppido Mamertina) and the main murder suspect, Giuseppe Mammone (Piminoro), and that they were involved in prostitution, extortion, and insurance scams, while Mammone had previously been deported from the US following a 1918 manslaughter charge in Buffalo, New York.

As in many later apparent 'Ndrangheta crimes, police were never able to bring Mammone to trial, yet the hard evidence for the existence of a foreign criminal secret society operating in Australia generated considerable alarm in Government circles at the time. In subsequent correspondence, the Federal Government requested urgent advice from Scotland Yard in London, estimating Society membership in NSW at 50 and about half a dozen in Melbourne.⁶ By contrast, Sydney's pro-Fascist *Il Giornale Italiano* ran a series of articles (some published in English for greater impact), denouncing claims of a 'Camorra' cell in Sydney as the figment of Australian journalistic imagination, and running the official Fascist party line that Mussolini had already virtually exterminated Italian organised crime by 1927 (Dickie 2011, 295f).

The mass internment of Italian men as ‘enemy aliens’ during the Second World War seems to have brought about the extinction of the ‘Black Hand’ phenomenon in North Queensland, although not in other parts of Australia. Whereas classical ‘Black Hand’ activities seem to cease in the US and Canada at the beginning of the 1920s Prohibition era, we find a 1957 case of ‘Black Hand’ extortion in Melbourne (Rosengreen 1958), while in the wake of a series of 1958 shootings and violence in Adelaide’s Italian community, South Australian (SA) police received an anonymous letter from a ‘Black Hand Society’ stating:

Warning. Police not interfere with Italians or get lot of trouble. We mind our own business so keep out, or else you get bullet. We now strong. Plenty of guns and silencers from Italians now.⁷

A CIB officer also alleged in court that the ‘Black Hand’ had intimidated witnesses in the fatal 1956 stabbing in Perth of Arcangelo Macrì by Salvatore Stillitano (*Argus*, 1 February 1956). As in the Southern Italian homeland in the same period (Dickie 2013) the Honoured Society began to be revitalised in the post-war era, particularly through mass immigration from ‘Ndrangheta-dominated areas of the province of Reggio Calabria, such as Oppido Mamertina, Platì and Gioia Tauro (Sergi 2014).

In 1958 we find the first detailed account of the inner workings of an actual Australian ‘Ndrangheta *locale*. A CIB report (Rosengreen 1958) on a police raid on a meeting of Calabrian men in the Melbourne suburb of Brunswick cites information from an unnamed police informant and group member revealing an organisation closely structured along traditional lines: as dictated by the ‘Ndrangheta *regola sociale*, all participants are armed with knives or pistols, which are collected on arrival and then returned at the end of the meeting; the members of the *società minore* meet in a separate room from the more senior members of the *società maggiore*, and the ranks of *picciotto* and *camorrista* are clearly discernible (cf Gratteri and Nicaso 2010, 36).

The Brunswick meeting was convened by Domenico De Marte (Delianuova), named by Rosengreen’s informant as leader of the Melbourne cell, with a view to disciplining Society member Rocco Tripodi for a recent breach of protocol. Three separate Melbourne ‘branches’ of the organisation were identified in Brunswick, Moonee Ponds and Coburg, although as in many other Australian references in English to ‘Ndrangheta ‘cells’ or ‘branches’, it is difficult to distinguish between the structurally important terms *locale* and ‘*Ndrina* (Direzione Nazionale Antimafia 2013, 751 n.331; Dickie 2013, 186f). Rosengreen’s informant estimated there were at least 150 Society members in Victoria, with active branches in Melbourne, Shepparton and Mildura, and also described attending a 1957 meeting of about 250 members, some perhaps from interstate, in Silvan, a fruit growing area on the outskirts of Melbourne.

Despite the remarkable overall success of ‘Ndrangheta actors in cloaking their criminal activities in secrecy, there are other occasions when the tip of the ‘Ndrangheta iceberg re-emerges into public view, often as a result of some particularly sensational act of violence, as in the 1963 murders linked to the ‘Ndrangheta’s fruit and vegetable extortion racket at Melbourne’s Victoria Market. On his death in 1962, long-time Melbourne boss Domenico Italiano was succeeded by Domenico De Marte, with the support of Vincenzo Muratore (Messignadi) as *contabile* (treasurer), Francesco Madafferi (Oppido Mamertina?), Michele Scriva and Italiano deputy Antonio Barbara. All except Barbara were commissioning agents in the Victoria Market; a diagram of stall holders in the market’s O Shed published in a Melbourne newspaper revealed a virtual *Who’s Who* of the Melbourne cell, and included Domenico De Marte, Vincenzo and Francesco Madafferi, Serafino Tripodi, Francesco Cammaroto and future boss of the Melbourne cell Rosario Gangemi, all except Gangemi previously identified by Rosengreen (1958) as Society members.⁸ Following attempts to establish a breakaway ‘*locale bastarda*’ by Vincenzo Muratore,

a power struggle broke out in which Vincenzo Angilletta (a former ‘estate watchman’ from Laureana di Borello, Gioia Tauro region) and Vincenzo Muratore were shot dead, and De Marte seriously wounded, forcing him to hand over leadership to Liborio Benvenuto, a native of Bruzzano Zeffirio (Cusack 1964).

Frustrated by a wall of *omertà* (silence) in Melbourne’s Italian community, police sought assistance from the FBI’s John Cusack and Ugo Macera of Italian Criminalpol. Macera carried out undercover investigations in the Victorian Italian community and later gave evidence as a prosecution witness in the 1965 trial in Palmi of alleged assassin Angelo De Marte (*Canberra Times*, 23 November 1966). Although the Macera report has never been released,⁹ the Cusack report reproduces a fragment of the familiar ‘Ndrangheta rules of association, as well as describing a large-scale extortion racket centred on the Victoria Market targeting Calabrian primary producers throughout Victoria, some of whom had reportedly been reduced to years of ‘virtual slavery’. In a particularly poignant anonymous letter found at the home of murdered ‘Ndrangheta extortionist Vincenzo Muratore, one victim wrote:

Muratore family

I do rite this letter in English as I want your kids to read your roten old man robed my father in the market. You did live good with money you robed from us in a good house when we are poor through you and we work hard.

Take you kid in Calabria when you was poor and living like a dirty rat when you had nothing and was poor too.

Go back to Calabria and live like a dirty criminal as you and your kid are. But no go in the market and rob like your father did from poor family like us.

(signed) one whose family was robbed by you. (Cusack 1964, 13)

Cusack estimated Society strength in 1964 at 300 in Victoria, including Mildura and Shepparton, with 200 in Melbourne. The organisation also existed in NSW and SA and ‘apparently to a lesser extent in Queensland and Western Australia (WA)’. In 1964, NSW Special Branch had observed a Society meeting in Sydney attended by about 55 members, with branch numbers estimated at approximately 500. Victorian, SA and NSW police had also uncovered travel arrangements for interstate meetings between Society leaders. Intelligence from the Victoria Market investigations also led to 1965 police raids targeting alleged ‘*ndranghetisti*’ in Griffith and Sydney which were severely censured by the Italian-language press in both Australia and Italy.

In an observation which recalls the careers of more than one later ‘Australian’ ‘Ndrangheta’ figure discussed below, Cusack stated that

In order to further their legitimate endeavours and cloak their illicit operations, Society members conduct a well-planned programme of ingratiating themselves with people of all walks of life. This calls for interest and activity in community and church affairs, including generous contribution to charities. They lead an ostensibly quiet and respectable family life and are ever ready to entertain and do favours for the right people. (Cusack 1964, 6)

In 1965, the Commonwealth Attorney General commissioned ‘The Italian Criminal Society in Australia’, a secret 146-page report by the ASIO’s Colin Brown on ‘Ndrangheta activities nationally. Brown was based in Melbourne, but visited all states, and was assisted by an extensive range of Italian and Australian Government and police agencies (Moor 2013). Although his report has never been officially released, summarised details suggest it provides a highly comprehensive account of the Society’s history in Australia, and names many of its key personnel (Minuti and

Nicaso 1994, 105; Moor 2013; Ralph 2012; Cash 1992). Harvey (1948, 6) had earlier described Black Hand gangs as being already well organised in the NSW Riverina area in the inter-war period, while Brown noted the 1932 murder of Griffith boss Rocco Tremarchi (Ralph 2012). Mildura boss Giuseppe Rullo (Oppido Mamertina) was awarded a Society ‘pension’ on his retirement in 1956, and honoured with the first in a long series of big mafia-style funerals on his death in 1964 (Ralph 2012). He was succeeded by Raffaele Romeo, thus inaugurating an enduring Riverina crime dynasty (Woodward 1979; McLaren 2011). The 1965 death of Sydney boss Domenico Strano saw a similar gangland-style funeral attended by ‘numerous criminal and public figures from NSW and interstate’ (Ralph 2012). Strano was succeeded by Raffaele Mafrici, then Domenico Alvaro, while Bruno Romeo (Platì) as head of the SA cell is reported to have made numerous trips to Sydney, Melbourne and Mildura in 1964 to keep in touch with Society leaders, including Domenico Alvaro (Cash 1992).

Clear evidence for the existence of a national ‘*camera di controllo*’ organised on Italian lines emerged in a 1966 NSW Commissioner of Police report claiming that leaders from each state attended a national meeting held each year in Mildura to coordinate activities across Australia. One hundred and sixty Society members had been identified in NSW, with branch membership estimated at 300–400 for Sydney, 50 for Wollongong and 150–200 for Griffith (NSW Commissioner of Police 1966). A 1969 Central Crime Intelligence Bureau of the Commonwealth Police report listed 341 suspected ‘Ndrangheta members in Australia (Small and Gilling 2010, 20), while a 1981 Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (ABCI) report described how Australia had been divided up into six regions, each with its own head: Giuseppe Carbone in SA, Domenico Alvaro in NSW, Pasquale Alvaro in the Federal capital, Canberra, close Al Grassby associate Peter Callipari¹⁰ (Platì) in Griffith, Pasquale Barbaro in Melbourne, and Giuseppe Alvaro in Adelaide (Ciconte and Macri 2009, 6). Western Australian and Queensland are notable absences from the ABCI list.

Australian ‘*ndranghetisti*’ had so far focussed exclusively, as in the early days of the US and Canadian mobs, on extortion rackets targeting the local Italian community, but the organisation was about to make a momentous paradigm shift into drug trafficking which parallels similar transformations taking place at the same time in Calabria (Ciconte 1996). From the early 1970s, ‘*ndranghetisti*’ began moving into large-scale cannabis cultivation in many remote bush locations all over Australia, most notoriously in the NSW Griffith region. Funds from the ‘Ndrangheta’s booming kidnapping business in the 1970s were now reinvested into its Australian cannabis operations (Ciconte and Macri 2009, 52; Minuti and Nicaso 1994, 106). As in Calabrian towns like Bovalino in the wake of the Getty kidnapping, the sudden flood of criminal proceeds became obvious in conspicuous Griffith property investment (Moor 2009). There is also evidence that some of these cannabis earnings were later reinvested in tourist infrastructure in Calabria’s marina towns, revealing an emergent pattern integrating Australia into an expanding global ‘Ndrangheta financial network (Ciconte and Macri 2009, 106; Small and Gilling 2010, 19; Moor 2013). But improved aerial surveillance techniques and increased police repression from the 1980s put increasing pressure on large-scale ‘Ndrangheta outdoor cannabis cultivation, but not distribution (McLaren 2011).

Concerned by the burgeoning Griffith cannabis industry, local businessman and Liberal Party candidate Donald Mackay initiated a high profile anti-drug campaign. His 1977 disappearance and presumed death led to the 1979 Woodward Royal Commission into Drug Trafficking. Woodward found that a criminal secret society composed exclusively of persons of Calabrian origin existed in Australia, that the Griffith branch was made up almost entirely of persons born in Platì, and that Donald McKay had been disposed of by members of, or on behalf of that organisation.

Increasing public concern about organised crime led in 1984 to the establishment of the National Crime Authority (NCA), intended to overcome the jurisdictional barriers of the Australian federal system in investigating organised crime (but also to bypass the problem of widespread corruption in State police forces revealed in the Woodward and subsequent Royal Commissions). The NCA focussed on 'Ndrangheta operations throughout the 1980s and 1990s, sometimes in close collaboration with Italian anti-Mafia investigators such as Nicola Calipari (Ciconte and Macri 2009), who spent three months with the NCA in 1988 and provided expert advice on the 'Ndrangheta, famously authenticating three 'Ndrangheta ritual texts found in the 1980s. Such texts have been reported in Far North Queensland (1930s), Sydney (1930), Melbourne (1957 and 1963), Adelaide (1987 and 1989) and Canberra (1982) and suggest that the organisation has been able to export its traditional quasi-Masonic corporate structure and culturally reproduce itself along traditional lines far from its homeland. Giovanni Falcone's 1990 visit to Australia as a guest of the NCA, during which he provided a list of 'ndranghetisti operating in WA, seems to confirm the view that Falcone considered Australia significant enough in the wider anti-mafia struggle to warrant the lengthy trip to the Antipodes (*Canberra Times*, 23 June 1991; Campbell et al. 1992, 162).

In 1989, Deputy Commissioner of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) Colin Winchester was shot dead outside his home in Canberra, in an execution-style killing which a police forensic expert described as the work of 'either a professional, or a very, very lucky amateur' (Campbell et al. 1992). Winchester had previously authorised a secret 'police crop': a cannabis plantation set up in an AFP double-cross operation in rural NSW to trace the supply network back to 'Ndrangheta ringleaders. Although it has become an article of faith for Italian anti-mafia investigators ever since that the Winchester killing was carried out by the 'Ndrangheta, this thesis has never been proved at law. Early AFP pursuit of 'Ndrangheta leads led to the discovery of yet another ritual text and the bugging of a 1989 'mafia summit' in Adelaide, where, according to Bob Bottom, senior Society members from all over Australia, and possibly overseas, discussed 'plans to corrupt judges, politicians and police, and to gain access to police intelligence files ... social security and insurance frauds, tax and Customs duty evasion, hard drugs, extortion, prostitution, illegal gambling and small arms smuggling' (Bottom 1991, quoted in *Canberra Times*, 6 June 1991, and Campbell et al., 1992, 150). The meeting seems to provide further evidence for the existence of a superordinate national '*camera di controllo*'. Yet the AFP 'Ndrangheta investigation proved inconclusive and at times inept (Campbell et al. 1992, 144–164; Eastman Inquiry 2013), and instead led to the conviction in 1995 of a mentally unstable (and non-Italian) Canberra public servant, David Eastman. Despite strenuous attempts by the AFP and the ACT Department of Public Prosecutions to prevent the case being re-opened, an inquiry into Eastman's conviction found in 2014 that it was legally flawed, and he has since been released on bail and his conviction quashed.

In 1994, a letter bomb in the NCA's Adelaide headquarters killed AFP officer Geoffrey Bowen and injured a police prosecutor; both were due to give evidence in the trial of 'Ndrangheta suspect Domenic Perre on cannabis charges the following day (Madigan 2013). Although the SA Coroner later found that Perre was responsible for the attack, he was never tried.¹¹ At the same time, a remarkable 18-month police undercover operation was penetrating the Griffith cell (McLaren 2011; Marrett 2005).

Melbourne's so called 'gangland wars' of the 1980s and 1990s have generated enormous interest in Australian organised crime, especially through the associated series of 'true crime' books and the TV series *Underbelly* (Gregg and Wilson 2010). In a sign of perennial tensions around the Victoria Market racket, Melbourne boss Liborio Benvenuto was targeted unsuccessfully by a car bomb in 1988, while Vincenzo Muratore's son Alfonso was shot dead in 1992 after

attempting to break away from the Honoured Society's market produce monopoly, which even extended to national supermarket chain Coles (*Herald Sun*, 25 March 2013). And yet 'Ndrangheta involvement in the 'Underbelly' saga seems at first strangely peripheral.

Alphonse Gangitano, Mick Gatto, Pasquale Barbaro and Mario Condello were young second-generation Italian criminals strongly associated with Melbourne's cosmopolitan 'Little Italy' in Carlton's Lygon Street, where reliable reports suggest that the 'Ndrangheta *pizzo* (extortion payment) was still being collected from Italian businesses recently. Although born in Calabria (Anoia, Gioia Tauro region), Condello migrated to Australia as a child, whilst Gangitano, Barbaro and Gatto were all Australian-born. As in Lupo's account of hybridised interethnic second-generation crime syndicates in the US (2008; Ianni and Ianni 1972), the 'Carlton Crew' were distinguished from earlier and more traditional Italo-Australian criminals by their status as public celebrities, and by their close collaboration with non-Italian criminals.¹² Carlton Crew leader Gangitano is said to have been from a 'respectable' (ie non-'Ndrangheta) Italian family (Silvester and Rule 2004, 22; Gatto and Noble 2010, 125f), while Barbaro was from a well-known Australian 'Ndrangheta dynasty. Although there is no clear evidence that Condello, Barbaro or Gatto were actual 'Ndrangheta affiliates, Condello, a deregistered lawyer shot dead in 2006, was later described by Italian Antimafia Commission head Roberto Centaro as an important 'Ndrangheta money launderer with 'criminal ties not limited to the Australian context but associated with the Calabrian 'Ndrangheta with all its connections across Europe and North America' (*The Age*, 17 April 2006; Moor 2009, 332–335), an observation which seems to confirm Australia's ongoing significance as a staging post in the 'Ndrangheta's vast global money laundering operations.

There is no necessary reason to doubt the sincerity of Mick Gatto's claims in his confessional autobiography (Gatto and Noble 2010) that despite an early life of petty crime, he never engaged in drug trafficking, and has since 'gone straight' and devoted himself to legitimate business activities as a 'labour negotiator'. Yet his claim quoted above that 'the mafia doesn't exist in Australia' simply does not bear scrutiny: Gatto's Calabrian-born father had a stall cheek-by-jowl with numerous Melbourne 'Ndrangheta members in the Victoria Market,¹³ and while working in the markets in the early 1960s, Gatto was himself on friendly terms with 'Ndrangheta hard man Domenico De Marte, describing him as 'a friend who was in business partnership with my father at the markets for a while' (Gatto and Noble 2010, 24); in 2008, Gatto also famously attended the funeral of Melbourne 'Ndrangheta boss Rosario Gangemi, doubtless 'to show respect' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 July 2008).

'Australian 'Ndrangheta': the political project

The cultivation of political cover for criminal activities has long been intrinsic to the entire mafia project (Paoli 2003; Lupo 2008). In Australia, 'Ndrangheta actors have successfully transplanted traditional 'mafia skills' (Varese 2013) through the cultivation of police officers (Bottom 1988; Woodward 1979; Campbell et al. 1992), judges (Small and Gilling 2011, 145, 148–150), public officials (Campbell et al. 1992, 269–274), and politicians. Domenic Perre, the probable author of the 1994 Adelaide NCA bombing, was even successful in charming an obvious 'sea green incorruptible' like his local MP, former SA Premier Lynn Arnold,¹⁴ into writing him a character reference. In a later police wiretap from jail, Perre told his wife to 'go and see Lynn Arnold and tell him that unless he intervenes in my case, no Italian will vote for him' (Madigan 2013, 147f).

It remains a moot point whether 'ndranghetisti in either Italy or Australia are actually able to determine electoral outcomes as effectively as they might wish gullible politicians to believe (for a

sceptical view, see Sciarrone, ed. 2014). Yet as in Italy, Australian *'ndranghetisti* certainly appear to have been able to achieve political leverage by trading on a *perception* that they can indeed organise the Italian vote in some Australian electorates (Bennetts and Sergi 2015). Veteran investigators Bob Bottom and Clive Small both believe that these circumstances may explain the conspicuous lack of zeal shown by Australian politicians in their pursuit of the *'Ndrangheta*.

Apart from Grassby's seat of Riverina, there is also clear evidence of *'Ndrangheta* penetration of the Belconnen (Canberra) and Fairfield (Sydney) branches of the Australian Labor Party, the traditional beneficiary of the migrant vote since the 1970s (Campbell et al. 1992; Small and Gilling 2010). In his maiden speech in the NSW Parliament in 1996, former ALP Minister and MP for Fairfield Joe Tripodi¹⁵ publicly thanked Fairfield ALP branch supporters Pat Sergi (Platì) and Tony Mittiga. Sergi, a major long-time ALP donor, friend and business partner of Tripodi, was named in the 1979 Woodward Royal Commission as a mastermind of the Griffith cell's money laundering operations in Sydney, while Mittiga's older brother, Francesco, facilitated Robert Trimbole's 1981 escape from Australia by arranging false passports while he was working in the Commonwealth Department of Immigration (Small and Gilling 2010, 23–25). In 1995, the NSW ALP even seriously considered running Sergi as its Fairfield candidate. For Small, the NSW ALP has been 'more anxious to hang onto the ethnic vote than investigate the party's connection to organised crime' (2010, 14). A year after the 1994 NCA bombing, the NCA released a report (National Crime Authority 1995) which (remarkably) found no evidence for the existence of an Italian organised crime group in Australia on the Italian model, and was denounced by Bob Bottom in the Brisbane *Courier Mail* as 'a blatant sop to ethnic sensitivities for what must rank as base political motives' (quoted in Small and Gilling 2010, 28).

Despite traditional *'Ndrangheta* ties to the ALP, there is clear evidence of a more recent shift to cultivating political links with the centre-right Liberal Party, as highlighted sensationally in a 2015 Fairfax/ABC TV *Four Corners* investigation. In the wake of the world's biggest ever ecstasy bust in Melbourne in 2008, it was recalled that one of those arrested, Francesco Madafferi (Oppido Mamertina), although previously charged over *'Ndrangheta* activities in Italy, had been granted Australian permanent resident status three years previously while facing deportation, following concerted political lobbying in the Italian community (Ciconte and Macri 2009, 44ff). The AFP later investigated claims that Liberal Party Federal Immigration Minister Amanda Vanstone had been influenced to reverse Madafferi's earlier deportation order in 2005 'on humanitarian grounds' by alleged donations of \$100,000 to the Victorian branch of the Liberal Party by Calabrian businessmen in Melbourne and Sydney, who also lobbied several other key Victorian Liberal figures on Madafferi's behalf. The lobbyists included Pat Sergi, Madafferi's brother Antonio, Sydney furniture entrepreneur Nick Scali (San Martino di Taurianova), and former Soccer Australia President Tony Labozzetta (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 February 2009). A full-page open letter to the previous Minister for Immigration on behalf of Madafferi had earlier been published in Italian language papers *La Fiamma* and *Il Globo* by aspiring politician and now Italian Senator for Oceania, Nino Randazzo (Ciconte and Macri 2009, 46f). The ease with which *'ndranghetisti* appear able to infiltrate the Australian political process was further confirmed by subsequent revelations that the son of an alleged Adelaide boss completed an internship at the Australian Embassy in Rome, while Vanstone was later serving as Ambassador to Italy. In 2007, the Adelaide boss had reportedly been tracked by Italian police through Rome in the company of then Rome *'Ndrangheta* boss Francesco Frisina (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 July 2015).

In the wake of several gunshot attacks on Melbourne pizza bars in 2013, *The Age* (8 March 2014) cited confidential police reports claiming that the 'Honoured Society' in Melbourne was still active in cannabis trafficking and extortion rackets targeting pizza restaurants, supermarkets and

food wholesalers across the city. Society members, it was alleged, put pressure on business owners to give them a share of their businesses at below market value, or in exchange for ‘protection’. The organisation’s head was identified as Francesco Madafferi’s brother, multimillionaire businessman Antonio Madafferi, who has long been involved in Victorian Liberal fundraising events, and who is considered capable of influencing the Italian vote in Melbourne’s south-east. Madafferi associate, Victorian Labor figure and local councillor Michael Teti was expelled from the party in the wake of the *Four Corners* exposé, after facing firearms charges and allegations of ALP ethnic branch stacking (*The Age*, 31 July 2015).

In 2011, Italian and Australian media reported that Italian anti-mafia prosecutors were seeking the extradition of Tony Vallelonga (Nardodipace), former Mayor of the City of Stirling in Perth, WA. On the basis of secretly-taped conversations in 2009 between Vallelonga and *maestro di giornata* of the Siderno *locale* Giuseppe Commisso, Italian prosecutors in the 2011 *Il Crimine 2* case (Tribunale di Reggio Calabria 2011, 577–591) and the Italian Direzione Nazionale Antimafia (2012, 124ff) have argued that Vallelonga was recognised in Calabria as a key figure in the Australian ‘Ndrangheta, attended a secret meeting of senior affiliates in Serra San Bruno, and had also sought validation from Commisso as boss of the Siderno ‘mother’ *locale* of his decision to oppose an attempted ‘breakaway’ *locale* in Australia (for Commisso’s role as a kind of ‘Ndrangheta ‘Minister for External Affairs’, see Gratteri and Nicaso 2013, 160). Ciconte and Macrì (2009, 7) have cited evidence from an Australian police informant for annual national meetings at which an Australian *capo crimine* was elected, his name communicated to the organisation in Calabria, and who then played a representative role with the mother organisation in Italy. One of Rosengreen’s informants stated (1958) that Melbourne boss Domenico Italiano had at one point acted as ‘national head’ of the organisation. If Italian investigators’ analysis of the Vallelonga/Commisso recordings is correct, it would suggest that Australian *locali* continue to maintain close administrative ties with ‘mother *locali*’ back in Calabria, as reported by Sciarrone for Germany and Northern and Central Italy.¹⁶

Conclusion

Despite the understandable reluctance of Australia’s Italian community to highlight the activities of a small minority of Italo-Australian criminals, it would seem irresponsible to ignore the potential threat posed to Australia’s economy¹⁷ and society by the ‘Ndrangheta. There is strong evidence that a well-organised Calabrian criminal secret society or network has been active in Australia since at least 1930, and is still involved in money laundering, extortion, and the wholesale trafficking of cocaine, ecstasy and cannabis. Its members have been responsible for a large number of murders (Minuti and Nicaso 1994 163f.), including the assassination of at least two, and perhaps three Australian public figures, and have also shown the familiar mafia genius for subverting local political and administrative processes. In the context of the increasing globalisation of organised criminal activity and the ‘Ndrangheta’s recent alarming ascendancy in both Italy and internationally, there is strong evidence for ongoing links to the powerful mother organisation in Italy.

Although close collaboration between Italian anti-mafia prosecutors and the National Crime Authority in the 1980s and 1990s led to some successful Australian police operations against ‘Ndrangheta actors, the long-established Australian Federal Police liaison office in Rome was closed down in the wake of 9/11 on the basis that counter-terrorism was now a higher security priority. Italian anti-mafia prosecutors have since made consistent public claims that Australia is underestimating the ‘Ndrangheta threat. The absence of a substantial scholarly

account of the activities of this highly dangerous criminal organisation in this country also means that Australia remains in many senses a missing piece in the larger 'Ndrangheta global jigsaw puzzle, and has also made it easier for local sceptics to deny the organisation's very existence. Understanding Australia's historical and current function within this expanding global network may also contribute to the wider struggle against 'Ndrangheta domination in Italy and worldwide.

Notes on contributor

Dr Stephen Bennetts is an Honorary Research Associate in University College London's School of European Languages, Culture and Society and a member of UCL's Australian 'Ndrangheta Research Group. He graduated from the University of Western Australia in 2013 with a PhD in Anthropology on the contemporary Southern Italian folk revival, after carrying out extensive ethnographic fieldwork in rural Calabria, Campania and Salento. He has also worked since 1994 as a consultant anthropologist for Aboriginal organisations in Northern Australia on Aboriginal heritage and native title matters.

Notes

1. NB also University College London's Australian 'Ndrangheta Research Group: www.ucl.ac.uk/australian-ndrangheta.
2. The term 'Dranghita' is first recorded in 1927 (Truzzolillo 2014, 117). Ciconte and Macri (2009) adopt the term 'Australian 'Ndrangheta' to emphasise their sense of the organisation's institutional continuity in Australia since the early twentieth century.
3. See Australian Press Council Adjudication No. 1065 (November 1999) [1999] APC 1065 and Adjudication No. 1123 (May 2001) [2001] APC 1123; *Joseph Zaia v Fairfax Media and Ors* VCAT A142/2010.
4. National Archives Australia (NAA) sources cited are available online at www.naa.gov.au; unless otherwise stated, all cited news sources are available online or via National Library of Australia's Trove site at: trove.nla.gov.au.
5. See recordsearch.naa.gov.au/Scripts/PassengerSearch.asp.
6. See NAA A981, ITA2.
7. Telegram to Department of Immigration, 26/9/58. NAA A6980, S250530.
8. *Truth*, 25 January 1964: NAA A446, 1964/45214.
9. For a précis, see Moor (2013). See also English and Italian language press coverage of Macera's investigation at www.ugomacera.it/biografia_criminalpol.htm.
10. Cf. Minuti and Nicaso (1994, 115–119); Grassby (1992).
11. Perre's appeal against the Coroner's findings was later dismissed by the SA Supreme Court: <http://www.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/sinodisp/au/cases/sa/SASC/2000/279.html?stem=0andsynonyms=0andquery=PERRE%20V%20CHIVELL>.
12. For similar evidence for recent 'ethnic hybridisation' and intergenerational transformation in Italo-Australian crime groups, see National Crime Authority (1995). For evidence of recruitment of 'Ndranghetisti into outlaw motorcycle gangs see Small (2011, 166f); Minuti and Nicaso (1994, 107).
13. Above, n 8.
14. Originally a Quaker, Arnold was ordained as an Anglican deacon in 2013.
15. A second-generation Calabrian Australian whose family hails from the Gioia Tauro region.
16. For further evidence of ongoing 'Ndrangheta links between Australia and Calabria, see Gratteri and Nicaso (2010, 86, 138, 139; 2011, 125; 2013, 61), Nicaso (2010, 106), Ciconte and Macri (2009, 7, 28f), Small and Gilling (2010, 19) and the Francesco Frisina incident described above.
17. For recent Australian Crime Commission estimates, see Davidson (2013).

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Italian summary

Sebbene gli studiosi italiani del fenomeno mafioso abbiano recentemente rivolto la loro attenzione verso la diaspora della mafia calabrese ('Ndrangheta) in Australia, i loro sforzi sono stati limitati dal fatto di condurre le loro ricerche lontano dall'Australia, senza poter beneficiare della conoscenza del luogo. I giornalisti australiani, al contrario, hanno per lungo tempo giocato un ruolo importante nel documentare le attività della 'Ndrangheta, ma sono stati in questo limitati dalla loro scarsa conoscenza del linguaggio, della cultura e della letteratura italiana scientifica. Come avvenuto in precedenza negli USA, la discussione degli studiosi australiani su tale fenomeno è stata inibita, specialmente dagli anni '70, dal discorso 'negazionista' e 'liberal progressista', che ha generato un silenzio sostanziale all'interno della letteratura scientifica. Questo testo cerca di spezzare tale silenzio instaurando un dialogo fra le fonti di studio italiane e quelle giornalistiche e d'archivio australiane, riepilogando, attraverso la letteratura riguardante la 'Ndrangheta, la chiara presenza in Australia sin dai primi anni '20 di figure criminali legate ad un'associazione a delinquere segreta altamente organizzata, e strutturata su linee familiari dall'Italia.