THE DREADED [ITALIAN] VOTING ABROAD ISSUE HAS RETURNED: THE SHIFTING AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT’S POLICY TOWARDS EXPATRIATE VOTING

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years there have been a growing number of countries pushing to enfranchise their citizens living permanently abroad (Spiro 2006: 214). Some countries have created ad hoc expatriate constituencies and representation in their national parliaments (Kull 2008: 462-463). Italy, for instance, altered its legislation governing the vote to Italian expatriates in the early 2000s. New legislation saw Italian citizenship holders living abroad granted the right to postal voting and parliamentary representation in Italian elections and referendums. The new legislation made the exercise of overseas voting accessible to all eligible voters through postal voting (2.9 million at the latest general election of 2008), created an overseas constituency divided in four vast electoral colleges (eg. a. Europe, b. South America, c. Central and North America, d. Africa-Asia-Oceania-Antarctica) and provided for representation for the Italian Parliament (12 members of the Chamber of Deputies and 6 Senators). Since 2003, Italian nationals resident abroad aged 18 or older (25 or older for Senate elections), including dual citizenship, ancestry citizenship (by descent) and naturalised (by marriage or adoption) Italians, were eligible to vote for Italian elections (2006 and 2008) and referendums (2003, 2005, 2006, and 2009).

The impact of the new legislation on Italian expatriate voting was particularly felt in the 2006 elections when for the first time 18 representatives from the expatriate communities were elected in Italy’s parliament, including two (one in the Chamber of Deputies and one in the Senate) from the Africa-Asia-Oceania-Antarctica electoral college, Australia included. The Italian expatriate vote was also one of the decisive features of the election, helping provide the winning centre-left coalition with a slender majority in the Senate (Battiston & Mascitelli 2008a: 265-267). What chiefly motivates governments to expand voting rights to expatriates, reminds Bauböck, “is [the conviction] to maintain political ties with those who have left but have retained [or acquired] their citizenship” (Bauböck 2005: 683). In the Italian case, we argued, that “Italian political parties sought out expatriate electoral support to boost their political ambitions in times of elections” (Mascitelli & Battiston 2008: 261).

Notwithstanding the need (or desire) by homeland governments and political parties to maintain a political link with its citizens abroad, migrant-sending countries and countries with settled diaspora communities abroad, see the expatriates as potential trade brokers and business investors. A study by Hugo on the one-million-strong Australian diaspora abroad indicated, for instance, that expatriates often acted as bridgeheads “for the introduction of Australian produced products into...
foreign markets”, were instrumental in creating “business links with Australia-based companies and individuals” and were instrumental in creating “networks with universities and other research institutions” (Hugo 2006: 121-122).

Despite several studies in the area of citizenship and dual citizenship in Australia (Davidson 1997, Chesterman & Galligan 1999, Hudson & Kane 2000, Brown 2002, Betts 2002, Rubenstein 2008) scholars have yet to come to terms with the impact of foreign expatriate voting in Australia. Only recently has the literature begun delving into the Italian case study (Mascitelli & Battiston 2008a, 2008b; Panichi 2008a, 2008b). What scholars and practitioners have so far failed to research is the response to the implementation of expatriate voting legislation by governments whose countries host sizeable expatriate communities that need to be properly researched. Thus this paper focuses on the shifting Australian Government policy towards expatriate voting, with a particular attention to the Italian case study, by means of undisclosed government files and interviews with former relevant Australian diplomatic and government officials.

METHOD

This paper is chiefly based on declassified Government sources obtained under the provisions of the Freedom of Information (FoI) Act (1982). The collection was made available to the authors by means of FoI (Ref. 68/F07) and it comprises correspondence to and from Australian and Italian Government institutions from April 1994 to March 2007. The FoI Section of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) identified 102 documents falling within the scope of the authors’ request i.e. “material related to the issue of the Vote to Italian citizenship holders residing in Australia”. Only 42 documents of the 102 documents were released in full whilst the remaining was released in part. Notably, FoI legislation “provides citizens with an ability and avenue to access documents in the possession of government departments and agencies”, while files relating to national security and privacy are blanked out or denied access (Stubbs 2008: 667).

Notwithstanding the fact that several sections where whited out for security and privacy reasons, that there are some extraordinary gaps (particularly, between December 1999 and July 2001) and that the material made available is nonetheless limited and possibly incomplete, the FoI collection obtained by the authors represents an invaluable source of research material and one which shows how government policy on the issue of expatriate voting evolved and changed over time. Along with FoI sources, the authors interviewed former and current Australian diplomatic (eg. Australian Ambassadors to Italy) and Government officials, such as Lance Joseph, Rory Steele, Murray Cobban, and Amanda Vanstone. An interview by ABC Radio National journalist to former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Alexander Downer was also utilised.

Interestingly, FoI obtained sources in Australia have rarely been used by historians. According to Greg Terrill, just a handful of historians regularly use FoI, due to widespread “cultural resistance” by academics to the use of such sources, and the practicalities and costs associated to access them (2001: 234-235). For this study, however, FoI sources proved to be critical in order to begin to reconstruct the rationale, the objections and the inconsistencies of Australian government policy towards expatriate voting.

DISCUSSION

Diaspora Parliaments: the Australian Government’s Perspective

Prompted by the need to act in response to Italy’s legislative proposal to offer Italians abroad the right to vote and representation in the Italian parliament, the then Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) prepared in March 1996 an internal report entitled Diaspora
Parliaments: The Issues and Implications for Australia. Australia conceded that one of the cornerstones of its multicultural policy, namely the basic tenet that naturalised migrants would solely and primarily identify with Australia, their adoptive country, was under challenge (DIMA, Diaspora Parliaments: The Issues and Implications for Australia, protected report, March 1996).

The 1996 DIMA report on Diaspora Parliaments sought to highlight the national (and potentially dangerous) nature of some countries’ attempt to reclaim expatriates: Australia’s citizenship and multicultural policy were at stake. With also the not-so-remote likelihood of a future Australian republic in mind, the report concluded:

Notwithstanding the “citizen of the world” concept, it can be argued that there is a fundamental issue of national sovereignty involved in the broad question of diaspora parliaments. To extend the political process of other countries into Australia’s own electorate not only introduces a concept that could become divisive within Australia but can also be seen as seriously depreciating the currency of Australia’s own citizenship. They may also be an assumption that the vast majority of Australians believe that citizenship demands an ambiguous commitment from those who are born here or those who choose to migrate from overseas. [...] At a time when the concept of an Australian republic appears to be gaining ascendency, an alternative concept that people can live and reside in Australia permanently while politically active in their country of origin is one that is open to question (DIMA, Diaspora Parliaments: The Issues and Implications for Australia, protected report, March 1996).

While stressing that world migration was indeed changing the traditional understanding of democratic citizenship from a nation-state perspective, López-Guerra argued that the possession of citizenship by expatriates should not necessarily entail the exercise of political (i.e., voting) rights, as “participation in a democratic process should be restricted to those who will be subject to the rulings of that Government” (2005: 234).

According to FoI sources, the attitude of the Commonwealth Government towards expatriate voting rights and representation was of “no objection” to expatriates of other countries who had (and exercised) the right to vote in domestic constituencies of those countries (P. Ruddock [Minister for Immigration and Multicultural Affairs], Letter to A. Downer [Minister for Foreign Affairs], 12/08/1996). The proviso was as long as the voting arrangements for foreign nationals did not contravene the Commonwealth and local by-laws of Australia. Countries such as the Portugal had been making periodical voting arrangements for their nationals resident abroad, Australia included. Canberra has always allowed foreign nationals resident in Australia the right to vote in elections of their country of origin provided that it was exercised through the casting of absentee ballots for domestic constituencies in which the voter resided prior to emigration (G. Dooley [DIMA], ‘Overseas voting rights for Italian Citizens’, fax to A. Gorely [DFAT], 10/10/1996).

The expatriate voting arrangements discussed by the Italian Parliament in the 1990s, which also envisaged the creation of an overseas constituency was however a step up in this understanding. It prompted the creation of an Inter-Departmental Committee (IDC), chaired by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs and included the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Attorney-General’s Department (A-Gs), the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) (T. Nguyen-Hoan [DIEA], ‘Report of first meeting – IDC on voting rights of citizens of overseas countries in Australia’, 4/7/1997). The IDC was convened once in 1993 and again in 1997 and 1998. It was given the task of codifying the policy on the matter.

“The Dreaded Voting Abroad Issue Has Returned”

It is important to highlight the bipartisan approach of the Australian Government to the issue of overseas constituencies and the undermining effect it may caused to the government multicultural
policies. In 1993 the Labour Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Senator Nick Bolkus stated in discussions with members of the Italian-Australian community that the Australian Government would not sanction Australian citizens running for the parliament of another country while still resident in Australia. Nor would it sanction the conduct of elections to foreign parliaments when those processes could be viewed as taking place within Australia (DIMA, Diaspora Parliaments: The Issues and Implications for Australia, protected report, March 1996). While the Minister may have made these comments, the Ambassador to Italy at the time, Lance Joseph was of the view that the Minister’s visit and discourse was not a high priority of concern by either the Minister or the Cabinet (Interview with Lance Joseph, 27/01/2009).

Why was the creation of overseas constituencies a source of such concern for the Australian Government? There were a number of causes for concern in the Italian expatriate voting issue. These included those of (a) extra-territorial application of the Italian legislation; (b) Australian sovereignty; (c) the ramification of the conduct of foreign election campaigns and exporting Italian politics; (d) the potential to divisiveness, rivalries, and tensions within the Italian-Australian community over election issues; (e) the potential to become a source of conflict with the Italian Embassy and Consulates; (f) the potential to damage bilateral relations between Italy and Australia; (g) the potential to set a worrying precedent for other countries (K. Mitchell [DFAT], ‘Briefing Notes – Italy’, fax to G. Kaminskas [DIEA], 10/4/1994; N. Bolkus [Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs, Australia], letter to S. Agnelli [Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister with responsibility for Italians Abroad, Italy], 1/8/1995). It held the view that Australian citizenship was dominant for those resident in Australia and that overseas constituencies could be seen “as seriously depreciating the currency of Australia’s own citizenship” (DIMA, Diaspora Parliaments: The Issues and Implications for Australia, protected report, March 1996).

The fact that Australian citizens could stand for elections conducted by foreign governments and sit in foreign parliaments was the heart of the matter. So much so that the Australian Government feared – astonishingly predicting in part what happened in the Italian elections of 2006 – that “an Australian resident, possibly with dual citizenship, could come to hold the balance of power in the Italian parliament and be tempted to use that power to induce the Italian Government to intervene in issues of an Australian domestic character” (Interview with Lance Joseph, 27/01/2009).

It is important to highlight the bipartisan approach of the Australian Government to the issue of overseas constituencies and the undermining effect it may caused to the government multicultural policies. In a letter of August 1996 to Alexander Downer (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Philip Ruddock (Minister for Immigration) reiterated the same concerns of his Labor predecessors which stated that: “Even putting aside the potential for community relations problems, I believe it is wrong in our multicultural society which operates within the fundamental framework of maintaining national unity that we should accede to arrangements by foreign governments which provide for direct representation of segments of the Australian community in foreign parliaments” (P. Ruddock, letter to A. Downer, 12/08/1996).

The legislative odyssey of the Italian expatriate voting legislation passed in 2001 was a particularly long one. Several similar proposals had been circulating through the Italian houses of parliament as early as 1955. For decades the chances of the proposed legislation on Italian expatriate finding a majority looked slim. In the early 1990s there was a renewed vigour by a growing number of Italian politicians to bring about this new legislation, a move that provoked the concern of the Australian and other governments. In September 1995, the Australian Ambassador in Rome, Lance Joseph writing to the West Europe Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), alerted his superiors that the voting rights for Italian citizens abroad was back on the agenda (L. Joseph, ‘Voting rights for Italian citizens abroad’, letter to I. Forsyth, 4/9/1995).
An impromptu press conference between the Australian and Canadian Governments (and signed off by the respective Canadian and Australian Ambassadors in Rome) proposed a letter to all members of the Chamber of Deputies and the Italian Senate publicising their joint opposition to the voting rights legislation (L. Joseph, ‘Voting rights for Italian citizens abroad’, letter to I. Forsyth, 4/9/1995). The presidents of two major parliamentary groups, Senator Cesare Salvi of the Federative-Progressive Group and MP Vittorio Dotti of Forza Italia Group promptly responded to the joint Australian-Canadian Ambassadors’ letter. Senator Salvi reassured the Australian Ambassador that the problems envisaged by the Australian Government could be solved (C. Salvi, letter to L. Joseph, 21/9/1995). He also attached a copy of his party’s proposed Constitutional Bill No. 2053 of 3 August 1995. The bill sought to “complete the [voting abroad] reform, so as to make it possible to elect an adequate number of senators.” A similar bill (No. 2033) did provide representation of Italians Abroad in the Chamber of Deputies but not in the Senate. However the Constitutional bill was anything but addressing Australia’s concerns. Forza Italia’s approach to the issue, on the other hand, seemed to have not only better comprehended Australia’s concerns but also gave Forza Italia the chance to state its own view on the matter. Dotti wrote:

[…] although firmly in favour of arrangements that would grant Italians abroad the right to vote, we in the Forza Italia Grouping have in fact expressed concern about this specific point of extraterritorial constituencies. We shall therefore be looking to support an arrangement for granting Italians abroad the right to vote that would not create problems in our relations with foreign states, especially with such a great democracy as Australia (V. Dotti, letter to L. Joseph, 27/9/1995).

In early 1996 a relieved Ambassador Joseph communicated to Canberra that the Italian Government was in the throws of another political crisis and that the dissolution of the Italian parliament meant that pending legislation designed to extend the vote to Italians living abroad had lapsed (L. Joseph, Inward cablegram to Canberra, 28/02/1996). It was almost a joyful Ambassador who realised that the whole process of re-proposing the legislation would need to start afresh after the April 1996 poll. Only months after the 1996 Italian election, right-wing National Alliance MP, Mirko Tremaglia, tabled yet another bill in the House proposing the vote to Italians abroad. Moved by unfaltering patriotism, Tremaglia made the voting abroad issue his raison d’être since the 1970s. The bill would extend the franchise to Italian citizens residing abroad, as the previous bill aimed to achieve, but included “a further irritant in the form of a detailed division of the world into specific sub-constituencies, including one for Oceania, Asia, Africa” (emphasis in the original) (L. Joseph, ‘Voting rights for Italians living abroad’, confidential inward cablegram to Canberra, 27/9/1996).

The resurfacing of the matter in the Italian parliament mandated Australia to step up its opposition. The Embassy in Rome was particularly active in expressing the Australian Government’s concerns on the matter to the Italian Government. On 2 October 1996, Lance Joseph wrote to (and later met with) the Italian Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs Piero Fassino stressing once again Australia’s fundamental reservations for the overseas constituencies (L. Joseph, ‘Voting rights for Italians living abroad’, confidential inward cablegram to Canberra, 27/9/1996).

“No Objection” in Principle to Australians Standing in Overseas Parliaments

In early 1997 the Ambassadorship in Rome changed from Lance Joseph to Rory Steele. The new Ambassador seemed no less determined to pursue the matter and he had little choice. While Steele informed Canberra of the new developments within the Italian Constitutional Committee, he also pressed Canberra for clearer guidelines on how to pressure the Italian Government on accepting Australia’s concerns. What also emerged was a further briefing on voting rights prepared for the upcoming visit to Italy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs Downer which would provide even further insight into the Australian Government’s thinking on the Italian voting issue (G. Toffolon [DFAT], fax to J. Duck [DIMA], 24/2/1997). The briefing identified the rationale behind the different approach adopted by the Australian Government towards the Portuguese and French situation which
differed from its approach to the Italian bill proposals. Glenda Toffolon of West Europe Branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) explained in the following manner:

These two [Portuguese and French] approaches to extending voting rights to ex-patriates [sic.] have not caused us difficulties because the size of the relevant ethnic communities in each case quite small, and because there is little danger of election campaigns taking place on Australian soil. […] However, such initiatives become of greater concern to us when the size of the relevant ethnic community in Australia is quite large and therefore likely to be susceptible to electioneering and/or considered for representation (G. Toffolon, fax to J. Duck, 24/2/1997).

In early 1999 Ambassador Steele in another cable to update Canberra on the new developments noted that Italy was creeping closer and closer to what Australia did not want in terms of the vote to Italians abroad. He acknowledged above all that the Constitutional draft bill included a new reference to an overseas constituency. He also noted that the centre-left government and not just the traditional proponents of the legislation like Tremaglia and other centre-right politicians were behind the push to conclude and approve this bill (R. Steele, restricted document to Canberra, 4/3/1999).

The Australian Government’s objections to the participation of its (dual) citizens in Italian elections began to gradually fall away under various pressures and considerations, such as the now inevitable enfranchising of the Italian diaspora due to the bipartisan political support, the global push towards dual citizenship and transnational voting rights and the unlikelihood that the implementation of Italy’s expatriate voting legislation in Australia might undermine Australia’s social harmony. In an email received by Steele from Toffolon, DFAT, for instance, stated:

Justin questioned what we had to gain bilaterally by trying to stop the Italians fulfilling what may become their constitutional right. I also discussed this point with Peter [Hayward]. […] For now Peter pointed out: the line we (you in particular) have been dishing out is a DFAT/Immigration Ministerial response. We note from the responses we have been receiving from Posts on this issue that most other countries don’t see Italian voting rights (or the system they want to introduce) as a problem – you also mention this in your email, or that it bores the sock off them (G. Toffolon, ‘Voting rights’, email to R. Steele, 17/4/1998).

In the course of 1999, the Australian Government’s line on the Italian expatriate voting issue began to turn into one of no-objections. In August 1999 John Duck from Multicultural Affairs Branch of DIMA sought to close the contradictions within the Australian Government position with a blunt reproach to various government departments. The new approach was to move away from the current in-principle objection to the establishment of overseas constituencies and to look at each voting rights proposal on its merits; this was signed off by Minister Downer (DFAT) and Minister Ruddock (DIMA).

With the passing of the Constitutional Bill on 29 September 1999 – it modified Article 48 of the Italian Constitution which extended voting rights to Italian citizens living outside Italy – Italian Embassies across the world sought approval by the respective foreign governments on four specific questions pertaining to assurances of proper conduct of the exercise of that right in the host countries (Italian Embassy to Canberra, Note to DFAT, 26/11/1999).

Approximately two months later, on 12 January 2000, DFAT issued its written response to the Italian Embassy in Canberra. The responses to the questions were succinct and straight to the point:

The Australian government wishes to inform the Italian government that it:
1) wishes to place no restrictions on the exercise of voting rights by Italian citizens and dual Italian and Australian citizens in relation to parliamentary elections in Italy as a result of the
establishment by the Italian government of a single global overseas constituency (‘an electoral district out of Italy’) for Italians living abroad;

2) has no objection to Italian citizens and dual Italian and Australian citizens standing as candidates for election to the single global overseas constituency;

3) has no objection to the setting up of polling stations at Italian diplomatic and consular missions in Australia or at other appropriate locations on Australian territory (e.g. premises of Italian clubs and associations); and

4) has no objection to the conduct of election campaigns in Australia subject to the laws of Australia, including the restrictions placed on the activities of controversial visitors by the Migration Act 1958 (DFAT, Note to the Italian Embassy, Canberra, 12/1/2000).

With this response, surprising in some ways, the Australian Government seemed to indicate that all its objections to the Italian expatriate voting legislation had evaporated. The possibility of Australians voting in, standing for or being elected to an overseas parliament was no longer seen as a difficulty, nor was campaigning that had once been seen as having the potential for social disharmony. The traditional key concern over an overseas constituency – ‘an electoral district out of Italy’ – was specifically deemed now to be acceptable. On this point it should be noted that, while the central issues of the Italian legislation had been agreed upon and these were what the Australian Government was responding to, there was still a wealth of detail yet to be hammered out in Rome. For instance, the precise nature of the ‘overseas constituency’ was yet to be determined.

Ambassador Rory Steele was succeeded by Murray Cobban in March 2001. The new Ambassador’s cable on the vote to Italians abroad dated July 2001 was entitled ‘Voting rights for Italians abroad – New Minister / Old problem’ (M. Cobban, restricted document to Canberra, 25/7/2001). The update cable summarised once again the annoyance of the Australian Government for the proposed voting system for Italians abroad (M. Cobban, restricted document to Canberra, 25/7/2001). Not only were the Italian bureaucrats “scrambling”, as the cable indicated, but so too were Australian diplomatic circles to better understand how to respond to this “new emergency”. But again in further unannounced fashion the Italian legislation which was now proposing geographical electoral colleges, prompted DIMA again through Peter Hughes to re-affirm the John Duck position of some months earlier (J. Duck, fax titled ‘Voting rights for Italians living abroad’ to P. Cornelly [DFAT], 31/7/2001). This same endorsement, of not seeing the proposed changes as warranting an alteration in the Australian Government position and therefore offering no objection even to the several global overseas constituencies, was provided also by the Attorney General’s department (J. Duck, fax titled ‘Voting rights for Italians living abroad’ to P. Cornelly, 31/7/ 2001). Possibly tired of the matter, DFAT instructed Ambassador Cobban with very clear directives, which reiterated the government position since 1999 (DFAT, communication to Australian Embassy, Rome, 1/11/2001).

Eventually the Italian parliament legislated in favour of postal voting and parliamentary representation for its Italian citizens resident abroad in December 2001.

In March of 2002 the Italian Embassy in Canberra issued a note to the Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs with a copy to DFAT requesting assistance with a forthcoming diplomatic mission from Italy to discuss Australian Government assistance in “relation to anagraphic data concerning Italian nationals living in Australia” (Italian Embassy, Canberra, letter to DIMIA and DFAT, 13/3/2002).

In a later communiqué DFAT reiterated the inability of the Australian Government to assist Italy their effort to check the accuracy of their Register of Italians in Australia. It stated:

The Australian government wishes to inform the Embassy of Italy that it does not hold information about Italian citizens living in Australia that would assist the Italian government in the development of a register of Italians citizens living abroad. However, the government is pleased to advise that there are no restrictions in Australia to prevent the Italian government from canvassing for the registration of relevant citizens (Italian Embassy, Canberra, letter to DFAT, 8/11/2005).
Not having assistance from the Australian authorities to update their electoral roll was a serious blow for the Italian authorities. The task would be a laborious and manual process both highly inefficient as well as being imprecise.

With the parliamentary life of the centre-right Berlusconi Government (2001-2006) coming to a close, the Italian Embassy sought guidance from the Australian Government on the conduct of the political campaign that would involve the Italian community in Australia in an Italian national election expected for either April or May of 2006. The Italian Embassy wrote in its *Nota Verbale* of 8 November 2005, “the conditions to be observed by the candidates in carrying out the activities of their electoral campaign under the Australian legislation” (Italian Embassy, Canberra, letter to DFAT, 8/11/2005). The DFAT response was short and general. It indicated there were “no federal laws that specifically restrict the conduct of elections or candidates for a foreign election conducted in Australia. However, local regulations may apply and the Embassy should advise candidates and their supporters to contact local government authorities regarding by-laws that may impact on the conduct of the election” (DFAT, letter to Italian Embassy, Canberra, 2/12/2005).

**CONCLUSION**

The Australian Government could not have been more cooperative in allowing the Italian elections of 2006 and of 2008 to be conducted within its sovereign borders; elections that permitted the Italian candidates to campaign openly and freely through the local and national media outlets, and the Italian voters, that is Italian (dual)citizens resident in Australia, to cast their ballot paper by postal means. This paper however has shown that the unfolding commitment by Italian governments in the late 1990s and early 2000s to enfranchise their citizens abroad and endow them with parliamentary representation has caused the Australian authorities some concern. The Australian government had to work out a comprehensive policy on the issue balancing the need of not having their perceived sovereignty infringed while at the same time appearing to spoil the Italian election in Australia. The Australian Government’s policy did change under various pressures and considerations, at national and international level, but this occurred gradually over the second half of the 1990s from one of “in-principle objections” to one of “no objections”. At the diplomatic and political level the Australian Government spokesmen eventually resigned themselves to a position of “not liking but not opposing” the Italian proposal. The FoI sources made available to the authors reveal that Australian Government Departments and Ministers did follow due process and procedures, but fail to reveal, on the other hand, how the shift of government policy from concern to indifference actually occurred towards the end of 1999 and the beginning of 2000 (afterall, not all material policy decisions are recorded and are therefore traceable). Further research may shed more light on this issue.

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