

Visit by the Ambassador of Italy

In February, I was privileged to meet His Excellency, Mr Gian Ludovico de Martino de Montegiordano, Ambassador of Italy, on his First Official Visit to Western Australia.

Ambassador de Montegiordano was appointed Ambassador in February 2009 and was accompanied by Dr Giorgio Taborri, Consul of Italy in Western Australia.

Ambassador de Montegiordano has a background in Political Science and has been assigned to Seoul, London, Moscow, Leningrad/St Petersburg, Paris, Baghdad and Canberra.

One of the Ambassador's most challenging posts came in April 2006, when Ambassador de Martino was appointed Coordinator of the Iraq Task Force at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Until February 2009, the Ambassador was Chairman of the Donor's Committee of the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq (IRFFI). It was interesting to hear about the Ambassador's position and experience whilst being in a testing environment. He is obviously regarded highly in diplomatic circles.

Italy is a member of the Group of Eight (G8) industrialised nations, the European Union (EU) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The Ambassador explained that since 1945, Italy has changed from an economy based on the agricultural sector to an industrial-based economy. It is ranked as the world's seventh largest economy and the fourth in Europe.

Western Australian merchandise exports to Italy were valued at \$79.4 million in 2009/10; Western Australia accounts for 8.5% of Australia's exports to Italy and Italy is ranked as Western Australia's 17th largest bilateral trading partner.

Western Australia also has an 11 year old Sister State relationship with Tuscany. The Department for State Development manages the Sister State Relationship between Western Australia and Tuscany, with the original agreement signed in 1999. The similarities between Western Australia and Tuscany are countless, with wine and tourism featuring prominently.

During the visit, Ambassador de Martino called on the Governor of Western Australia, the Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Leader of the Opposition, Chief Justice of Western Australia, the Lord Mayor of the City of Perth, Minister for Education, and visited the Consulate of Italy, as well as holding briefings with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia and the Department of State Development.



Picture: *The President, Hon. Barry House presenting a gift to the Ambassador of Italy, His Excellency Mr Gian Ludovico de Martino di Montegiordano.*