

New business network for Italians on the Coast

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Joe Natoli, front, with Debbie Battaglini, in the car, Matthew Murray and owner of Arnica Restaurant Michael Torchia. *Kristy Muir*

THE Italian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Queensland is establishing a branch on the Sunshine Coast.

The local group will be launched at a lunch function early next week with president of the ICCI (Qld) Santo Santoro and Phillip Di Bella, of successful specialty coffee company Di Bella Coffee, among the special guests.

Mr Santoro, a former state and federal parliamentarian, said Italians had made a significant contribution to the Australian way of life, particularly since the post-war migration boom, which saw thousands migrate away from poverty, unemployment and social upheaval in search of a better life in "the land down under".

"There is a small but passionate group of locals from Italian descent here on the Sunshine Coast and there is a wonderful opportunity for them and others to benefit from the many services and networks provided by the Italian Chamber of Commerce," Mr Santoro said.

"The Brisbane branch has many members, including a number of high-profile Italo-Australian businesspeople who have carved out a successful life in a number of industries, including construction, finance, small business, tourism, government services, politics, arts and education.

"It's a great mix of people. We have a lot of fun and organise very effective networking functions and events.

"The chamber also assists local businesses that want to export products and services into Italy. The chamber receives requests from many Italian businesses who are seeking trade opportunities in Australia. It's our role to facilitate these requests and we've had some great success stories over the years."

Mr Di Bella, whose company supplies coffee to some 1200 cafes and restaurants around Australia, will share some of his story at the function.

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