



JOURNAL FOR MALTESE AROUND THE WORLD

**MALTESE E-NEWSLETTER**

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## Melania Trump pens letter to Putin

### You can restore children's laughter



**Malta's first female poet**  
**MARY MEJLAQ**



**MALTA SAVED  
EUROPE**

**The Great Siege of Malta  
1565**



**GIOVANNA BORG**  
**104 YEARS OLD**  
**The eldest  
Maltese Australian**



**INTRODUCING  
THE NEW  
QUEENSLAND  
MALTESE  
ASSOCIATION  
COMMUNITY  
INC.  
(QMAC)**



*CARMA*  
**Cairns and  
Region  
Maltese  
Association  
Incorporated**

**Washington: US President Donald Trump handed Vladimir Putin a special item at their Alaska summit this month - a letter written by his wife, First Lady Melania Trump, pleading for the Russian leader to make peace in the name of children.**

Dear President Putin,

Every child shares the same quiet dreams in their heart, whether born randomly into a nation's rustic countryside or a magnificent city centre. They dream of love, possibility, and safety from danger.

As parents, it is our duty to nurture the next generation's hope. As leaders, the responsibility to sustain our children extends beyond the comfort of a few.



Undeniably, we must strive to paint a dignity-filled world for all - so that every soul may wake to peace, and so that the future itself is perfectly guarded.

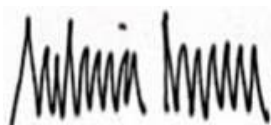
A simple yet profound concept, Mr. Putin, as I am sure you agree, is that each generation's descendants begin their lives with purity - an innocence which stands above geography, government, and ideology.

Yet in today's world, some children are forced to carry a quiet laughter, untouched by the darkness around them - a silent defiance against the forces that can potentially claim their future. Mr. Putin, you can singlehandedly restore their melodic laughter.

In protecting the innocence of these children, you will do more than serve Russia alone -you serve humanity itself. Such a bold idea transcends all human division, and you, Mr. Putin, are fit to implement this vision with a stroke of the pen today.

It is time.

Sincerely,



**Melania Trump – FIRST LADY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**





## POPE LEO XIV DINES WITH 100 HOMELESS AT CASTEL GANDOLFO

[Dylan Attard](#)

-Over 100 homeless and vulnerable people supported by Caritas of Albano joined Pope Leo XIV for a meal in the gardens of Castel Gandolfo, where the Pontiff is spending much of his summer break.

The initiative continues the practice established by Pope Francis, who frequently invited disadvantaged groups to share meals with him. Many of the

attendees at Castel Gandolfo face homelessness or other personal difficulties, and the gathering was coordinated by the Diocese of Albano Laziale together with the Borgo Laudato Si' centre.

Speaking off-the-cuff during the meal, Pope Leo stressed that every individual reflects the image of God, describing humanity as His "most beautiful creation". He urged those present never to forget this truth, affirming that "the presence of God can be encountered in every person".

The Pope praised the organisers for their efforts in making the event possible before underlining that Christian life is not limited to attending Mass but is lived fully by embracing the values that define discipleship.

Cardinal Fabio Baggio, director of the Borgo Laudato Si', remarked that the Pope is realising Pope Francis' vision of the centre, not merely as a facility, but as a way of embodying the Gospel by opening doors to those in need.

### PRESS RELEASE

#### SUMMERDAZE 2025 FESTIVAL DAY 2



The sixth edition of SummerDaze Malta came to a close last night with a grand finale at Ta' Qali National Park. Thousands of attendees gathered for the concluding event, headlined by internationally acclaimed artists including Sfera Ebbasta, Bob Sinclar, Albertino, Kid Yugi, Clara, Vida Loca, and DJ Hellen. The performances delivered an exceptional level of energy, bringing the Santa Maria weekend to an impressive conclusion. Organised in collaboration with Radio M2o, this year's closing event once again highlighted the festival's strong international appeal, with a significant number of visitors travelling from Italy to experience SummerDaze in Malta.

A heartfelt thanks goes to everyone who joined and contributed to making the sixth edition of SummerDaze truly memorable. The Malta Tourism Authority looks forward to welcoming audiences back for SummerDaze Malta 2026!

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**Mario Farrugia Borg Director – Australia & New Zealand MALTA TOURISM AUTHORITY**

**QUEENSLAND MALTESE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY INC.**

1, Cambridge Street, Red Hill 4059 QLD

19<sup>th</sup> August 2025**Mr Frank Scicluna -Editor**

Maltese E-Newsletter

Delivered via email: [maltesejournal@gmail.com](mailto:maltesejournal@gmail.com)

Dear Frank,

On behalf of the Management Committee, I am delighted to introduce the Queensland Maltese Australian Community Inc. (QMAC), a newly incorporated body established to continue the legacy of service to our community in Queensland following the winding up of the former association.

We are deeply aware of the important role that the Maltese E-newsletter has always played in representing and supporting our diaspora.

Your efforts have been a source of inspiration as we undertake the task of building a new organisation for Queensland Maltese-Australians.

Our objectives are aligned with those of other Maltese organisations: to preserve our language, culture, and traditions; to provide welfare and community support; and to ensure that younger generations remain connected to their heritage. As a newly formed association, we would greatly value the opportunity to collaborate with you and explore opportunities for joint initiatives that strengthen the Maltese voice across Australia.

Yours sincerely,

**Sandra Micallef President****FLAG OF QUEENSLAND***Queensland Maltese Australian Community Inc.*e: [Alexandra.micallef@gmail.com](mailto:Alexandra.micallef@gmail.com)**Mrs Antoinette Aquilina Secretary**email: [antoinetteaquilina@me.com](mailto:antoinetteaquilina@me.com)

**CARMA (Cairns and Region Maltese Association Incorporated), Queensland, Australia, was established in Feb 2018 to enable gatherings where Maltese culture and heritage are shared and celebrated. Thanks, Vicky, for sharing this journal with nearly 200 others.**





## FEAST OF ST MARY'S ASSUMPTION, MACKILLOP PARISH, WARNERVALE, CENTRAL COAST NSW

**Maltese Welfare NSW Inc**

**Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2025**

Congratulations are extended to the organizing committee of the **Festa of St Mary's Assumption and the Parish Clergy** for orchestrating an excellent and memorable celebration.

A solemn High Mass was presided over by Bishop Anthony Randazzo of Broken Bay, who delivered an inspiring homily and reflected on his ties with the Maltese community, including recollections of his visits to Malta. He was joined by Fr Phillip Thottam MSFS, Parish Priest; Fr Joshi Naduppura MSFS, Assistant; and Fr Carmelo Sciberras OAM LtCol (Retired), all supported by the Parish Choir and Senior Liturgical Servers. The event was widely regarded as meaningful and uplifting.



Distinguished guest **Annaliese Sammut, NSW Consul General for Malta**, honored the occasion with her presence.

An outdoor procession featuring the Statue of St Mary, accompanied by the Tuggerah Lake Show Brass Band, took place on the parish grounds, during which the Rosary was recited. Benediction followed the conclusion of the procession.

Attendees participated in outdoor activities where vendors offered traditional Maltese Festa cuisine, and the brass band provided entertainment for the gathered crowd. The festivities concluded with a remarkable fireworks display, much to the delight of the many children in attendance. Special appreciation is extended to **Charlie Scicluna and Fr Carmelo Sciberras** for their dedication in preserving this important Maltese cultural event on the Central Coast.

The Maltese Welfare NSW executive committee were very proud to attend.

**Lawrence Gatt**

**President, Maltese Welfare NSW and CMLA Regional Committee member Central Coast NSW**



## GET READY FOR HARD ROCK HOTEL MALTA, OPENING IN 2026

By [Lovin Malta](#)

Hard Rock International has confirmed that the Hard Rock Hotel Malta is on track to open in early 2026. This will be the brand's first hotel on the island and a dynamic new addition to Malta's lifestyle and hospitality scene.

Located in the heart of St Julian's, the hotel will

offer 394 sea-view rooms, suites, and villas, including 25 private pool units and two executive club floors. The hotel is designed to cater to a wide range of guests, from couples and jetsetters to families and business travellers. More than just a hotel, [Hard Rock Hotel Malta](#) will be a complete destination resort. It is set to become a vibrant social hub, blending Malta's local charm with the brand's international flair. With 15 restaurants, bars, lounges, and club concepts, a rooftop splash pool, and what promises to be one of the largest wellness and fitness offerings in Malta.

**The hotel will be a true lifestyle resort at the heart of the island. Some key features include:**

- 10 outdoor pools and jacuzzis, catering to different moods, including adults-only areas, family zones and a rooftop infinity-style splash pool
- Separate indoor pools for wellness, fitness and children
- Over 3,000sqm dedicated to spa, wellness and fitness, featuring longevity-led treatments, AI-integrated training zones and holistic therapies
- A branded international beach club (to be revealed)
- 12 dining and nightlife outlets offering something for every taste and generation, including rooftop and beachfront dining options
- A flexible event and conference space, including a ballroom with natural light, sea views, and outdoor terraces
- One of Malta's largest lifestyle shopping malls, a hypermarket, and 1,300+ car parking spaces for added convenience
- Signature Hard Rock memorabilia featured throughout the hotel, showcasing the brand's deep musical legacy and storytelling spirit

"We are building a place where visitors and locals alike can meet, unwind, celebrate, or simply enjoy the best of what Malta has to offer," said Robert Debono, CEO of db Group, the development partner behind the project.

"We're focused on creating something that feels international but is rooted in the local spirit."

"Hard Rock Hotel Malta will be a flagship for the region – a bold, music-infused destination where the energy of our brand meets the spirit of the island," said Florian Walther, General Manager, Hard Rock Hotel Malta. "Whether you're relaxing by the rooftop pool, dining beachside, or exploring our signature memorabilia, this property captures everything that makes a Hard Rock Hotel unforgettable."

Construction is progressing on schedule, with teams now focused on recruiting top international talent, forging partnerships, and preparing for a global guest launch in 2026. The project has been designed to meet LEED Silver certification, in line with Hard Rock's sustainability principles and commitment to responsible hospitality development.

As with all [Hard Rock Hotels](#), guests can expect a seamless fusion of music, wellness, culture, and community – brought to life with signature energy, curated entertainment and authentic storytelling that continues to define the Hard Rock experience around the world.

**SS Le Polynésien****REMEMBERING THE  
SS POLYNÉSIEN NEW  
MONUMENT AT  
MARSASCALA**

Press release | 13 August 2025

The Serbian community in Malta through the Educational and Cultural Centre 'St Helen of Anjou', in collaboration with

Heritage Malta's Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit and the Marsascala Local Council, inaugurated a new monument at Fajtata Bay, Marsascala, commemorating the tragic sinking of the SS Polynésien during the First World War.

On 10th August 1918, the SS Polynésien, a luxury French liner converted into a troopship, was torpedoed off the coast of Marsascala by the German submarine UC-22. On board were 499 Serbian cadets of the officer school, accompanied by Second Lieutenant Tajić and the famed war heroine Sergeant Milunka Savić. Although most of those on board were rescued, at least 17 people lost their lives, including Lieutenant Tajić and two cadets.

The survivors were cared for in Malta before continuing to the Salonica front, where they contributed to the final campaigns of the war and the liberation of Serbia. This episode remains a testament to Malta's crucial role as the 'Nurse of the Mediterranean' and highlights the shared sacrifices of different nations during the Great War.

The monument was unveiled during a commemorative event attended by Dr Owen Bonnici, Minister for Culture, Lands and Local Government, Arnaud Gouillon, Director of the Office for Public and Cultural Diplomacy of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, which supported its creation, as well as Mr Valentin Martinez on behalf of the French Embassy.

Also present were representatives from the Serbian Educational and Cultural Centre 'St Helen of Anjou', Heritage Malta's Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit, the Marsascala Local Council, and the local Serbian community.

Installed on the Marsascala promenade overlooking the wreck site – which is an underwater archaeological zone managed and protected by Heritage Malta through its Underwater Cultural Heritage Unit – the monument features a 3D model of the Polynésien, both as it once sailed and as it now lies at a depth of 65 metres.

The ceremony honoured those who perished with a blessing service, wreath-laying, and a minute of silence. Following the unveiling, guests were invited to explore the wreck through an immersive virtual reality experience of the SS Polynésien.

**WE THANK ALL THOSE WHO SENT A DONATION****Bank - Commonwealth (Australia)****BSB - 065106****Account No. - 00502597****Name - Frank Scicluna****For overseas donors - BIC/SWIFT code:CTBAU2S****DONATE AND KEEP THE JOURNAL ALIVE**





## **ARMED FORCES OF MALTA (AFM)**

### **Achievement of Kieron Axisa**

The Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) proudly announces the exceptional achievement of Second Lieutenant Kieron Axisa, who has recently completed his training at the prestigious Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the United Kingdom.

On 8 August, during the Sovereign's Parade marking the completion of the rigorous 44-week Commissioning Course, 2nd Lt Axisa was awarded the International Award presented to the top international cadet in recognition of outstanding performance in military, academic, leadership studies and practical scenarios.

The AFM's commitment to delivering comprehensive, high-quality training for all serving officers and other ranks is reflected in initiatives that include local training in selected academies and institutions, as well as specialised international military programmes coordinated by the AFM. This multifaceted approach continues to deliver tangible results, as evidenced by the recent accomplishments of AFM personnel.

Captain Shaun Ciantar and Captain Kayleigh Gelfo have successfully completed the "United Nations Military Observer Course (SUNMOC)" with SWISSINT in Stans, Switzerland — a demanding three-week programme designed to prepare military experts for UN peacekeeping missions. The course combined

classroom learning with hands-on training in areas such as vehicle handling, mine awareness, negotiation, map reading, first aid, and field operations, culminating in a seven-day multinational exercise simulating life and duties in a post-conflict environment.

Following this, they were joined by Lieutenant Nikolai Cutajar for the "United Nations Staff Officers Course (SUNSOC)". Over two weeks, they developed skills in the "UN Military Decision Making Process", multinational planning, operational briefings, and mission coordination within



simulated UN Force Headquarters. Training scenarios focused on the protection of civilians, gender integration, and cooperation with civilian and police components of UN missions.

These achievements highlight the Armed Forces of Malta's commitment to preparing its personnel for effective service in complex, multinational peacekeeping environments, contributing to international peace and security





**Giovanna as a child,  
as an adult and now**

## **CONGATULATIONS GIOVANNA BORG 104 YEARS OLD**

### **The Oldest Maltese Australian in Adelaide**

Giovanna Borg nee Sultana was born on the 17th of August 1921 in a place called Cospicua, (Bormla) Malta. Her parents Peter & Emmanuella were both of Maltese lineage and they had 5 children, Giuseppe, Carmela, Giovanna, Frankie and Maria. Her family was very poor, but somehow her parents always managed to provide the children with a loving home, food and their basic needs. Fortunately, Giovanna was a smart little girl, with a keen desire to learn and possessed good observation and memory skills, which would serve her well in her adult life.

Giovanna started working at a very young age, as most children of that generation did to help her family make ends meet. She carried that trait proudly throughout her entire life. even to this day.

1942 Giovanna was a 21year old beautiful young woman with dreams, working, and looking forward to her future ahead, but little did she know her dreams were soon about to be completely shattered. World War 2 had started spreading rapidly throughout Europe and the entire world. Giovanna experienced first-hand the hardship of life and destruction of her precious homeland Malta, which historians have recorded was the most bomb country during the World War 2.

Life for Giovanna and her family had suddenly become unpredictable, a struggle to survive, enduring restrictions of movement and freedoms, food shortages and rationing and living with the constant fear of dying and death, something she struggled to comprehend.

The lack of food provisions eventually gave Giovanna no choice but to leave her parents' home and bomb shelter, to find work and support herself, however she could, as the family rations were not sufficient or enough to feed everyone. Due to her lack of education, she found herself working as an in-house servant, usually within the households of some of the wealthier Maltese families. Giovanna began to learn different and new life skills along the way, which she mastered such as cooking, sewing, embroidery, and cleaning etc.

Through all the hardship, chaos and struggles, love still managed to find Giovanna 's heart. She met a handsome young man called Carmelo, during this time and they fell in love. They began their courtship with the approval of her father and older brother, and shortly after the war had ended in 1945, they were immediately married.

They began their modest life together with what little they had saved and what was available to buy at the time. The young couple started their own family, eventually also having 5 children, of their own, Josephine, Alfred, Mario, Maryrose and Rita.

They had a traditional Maltese family, with Giovanna, as the homemaker and Carmelo, as the breadwinner, and brought up their children in the Catholic faith.

She was a loving mother but could also be quite strict and firm when needed. So when she said NO! to anything which was quite often! the children all knew she meant business and it was pointless trying to change her mind. Carmelo . on the other had was a little more laid back.

Giovanna & Carmelo lovingly watched their family grow up fast, with the elder ones becoming young adults, they were constantly concerned about what their future would look like, and their job prospects.

Later in 1963, they made a monumental decision to migrate to Australia, Adelaide, with the Sponsorship and assistance of Carmelo's father Nazzareno, who had been living in Australia for many years already.

This was a very courageous move and culture change for the entire family, especially for Giovanna & Carmelo, who had little knowledge of the Australian lifestyle and who were both illiterate and spoke little English.

Giovanna struggled with the language barrier at first and longed to go back to Malta every single day, but as time and the years passed, she learnt to adapt and managed to adjust to her new home and life in Adelaide.

With the initial help from Carmelo's father, caring people, good neighbours, lots of hard work and determination, the family began to settle down and prosper.

his year on 18th December, 2025 will mark the family's 62rd anniversary in Australia.

Giovanna & Carmelo were married for over 54 years, when Carmelo passed away in 1999.

During her long-life Giovanna has endured anxiety and suffered and survived several major health issues, but with her strong faith, determined attitude and independent character, she has always somehow managed to rise up and meet them head on.

She remained living alone, even travelling back to Malta for one final visit and to reunite with her remaining siblings in 2005 at the age of 84?

Giovanna took pride in her home, loved her garden and watching plants grow, she had many indoor plants, she enjoyed cooking her traditional Maltese food, sewing her own clothes, knitting, was addicted to watching her Maltese CD and her regular weekly outings to play bingo, pokies and fantasized of one day winning big with X lotto, and would often tell [us] her children she was only playing to win for us. She remained living on her own for many more years, with support and assistance from her children and later also received help from carers.

Giovanna was still living at home at the ripe old age of 101, however she was slowly starting to show signs of movement and memory decline, especially regarding her own safety.

Unfortunately, in May 2023, one evening she suffered a major fall and had to endure a long cold night on the floor alone for many hours, which was very tragic and traumatic.

Somehow, she managed to get enough strength to drag herself to the phone and call her family for help. She ended up in hospital for several weeks and was later transferred into a nursing home facility for her own safety and wellbeing, where she is still living now.

Giovanna is the sole survivor from her entire family. She has 5 Children, 9 Grandchildren and 14 Great Grandchildren This August 2025 she celebrates her 104th birthday.,

She is certainly one amazing, strong, determined, brave and tuff lady.

What's that famous quote: ***"They don't make them like they use to"***

***THE EDITOR AND READERS OF THE MALTESE JOURNAL WISH GIOVANNA  
GOOD HEALTH AND COMFORTABLE LIFE AND MAY GOD KEEP HER UNDER HIS CARE  
FOR THE REST OF HER LIFE***





## MALTESE WOMAN KILLED IN AUSTRALIA LAID TO REST IN GOZO

A woman of Maltese descent who tragically lost her life in a traffic accident in Australia last November has been laid to rest in Gozo. Mary Ann Cutajar, 46, originally from Qala, Gozo, emigrated to Australia around 30 years ago.

The fatal accident occurred on November 7 along a Melbourne highway, when a piece of metal fell from a truck traveling in the opposite direction and struck the windscreen of her car. Cutajar died instantly at the scene. Although the truck driver initially drove on, he was later apprehended. Her husband, Daniel, chose to bring her back to her hometown of Qala for burial. She was laid to rest in

the Qala cemetery on August 7 — the day she would have celebrated her birthday.



**Malta's first female poet  
Mary Meilak (1905-1975)**

## MUSICAL TRIBUTE COMMEMORATING THE CULTURAL LEGACY OF GOZITAN POET MARY MEJAJQ

The year 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the death of the pioneering poet Mary Meilak in Maltese literature. In order to celebrate her contribution to the Romantic period of Maltese literary history, the Maltese Language Centre, in collaboration with the Arts Council Malta, has funded the creation of a CD entitled Mara.

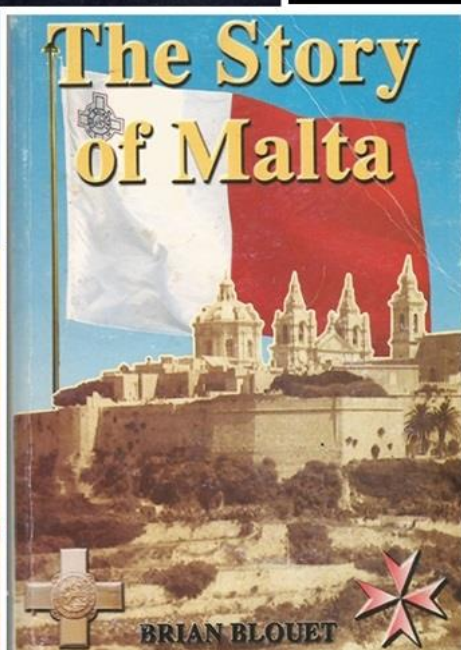
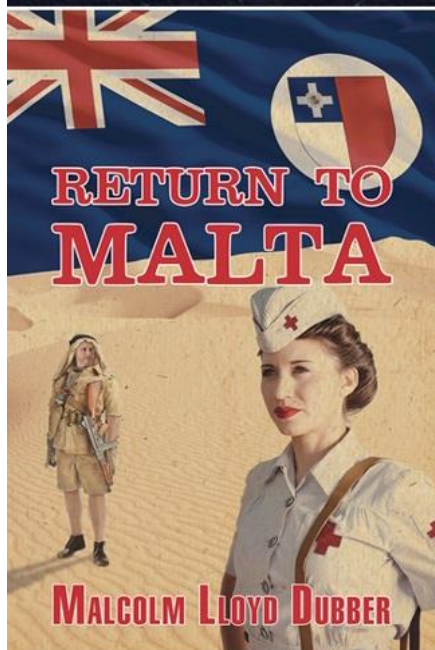
Mara is produced by Lito's Space, with songs built on the lyrics of six poems from Meilak's repertoire of poems and set to music by Mro Dominic Galea. During the launch of Mara it was explained that the contribution of Mary Meilak – who was Gozitan – to the development of the Maltese language was a very important contribution. This work also has educational relevance as two of the poems – Xita and Ġejja x-Xita – are included in the non-prescriptive Maltese syllabus for the seventh and eighth scholastic years.

Maris Camilleri, Acting Chief Executive of the Maltese Language Centre, praised the collaboration between the Centre and the Arts Council Malta and stressed that “synergies like these are the way forward so that we can continue to support various projects and initiatives whose aim is to ensure that the Maltese language remains alive, relevant, and visible, while continuing to spread in all areas.



" She praised Mary Meilak's contribution and stressed that as a woman and as an academic in the field of Maltese, she felt that with a sense of duty she could not let this anniversary pass without shining the deserved spotlight on a pioneer in the Maltese literary field. This musical album based on six poems by Mary Meilak was launched in the same month that also marks the second anniversary of the establishment of the Maltese Language Centre. This conference was attended by entities and individuals who have been working for years in support of the Maltese language, including the Maltese Academy, the Maltese Teachers Association, the Maltese Education Officers, members of the National Council for the Maltese Language, as

well as the renowned author Trevor Zahra.





## BROTHERS REUNITE AFTER 50 YEARS: A TALE OF MIGRATION BETWEEN MALTA AND AUSTRALIA

by Juliana Zammit [maltatoday.com.mt](http://maltatoday.com.mt) Photos: James Bianchi MaltaToday



Two Maltese brothers, Richie and Sonny Borg, reunite in Malta after half a century apart, reflecting on migration, family, and the changes time brings. They spoke to Juliana Zammit in this emotional reunion. Richie and Sonny Borg reunited last April after spending 50 years on other sides of the world. Two Maltese brothers spent 50 years apart but last April, they finally reunited in Malta in what was an emotional rollercoaster.

Richie and Sonny Borg were forced to emigrate in the 1960s by their mother. They left for Australia at a time of mass emigration, when many Maltese like them sought a better life in foreign lands. Richie returned to Malta after a brief stay when he was drafted for the Vietnam war at age 21. He eventually settled in Malta permanently. But Sonny remained in Melbourne, creating the 50-year separation that made their reunion so emotional.

Richie explained how they were both forced to leave Malta due to family pressure. “None of us wanted to go to Australia,” he said. “We had to go because our mother was determined that we should all leave Malta.”

During the 1960s, thousands of Maltese emigrated to Australia, lured by promises of a better life. Their mother had been influenced by family members who painted an overly positive picture of life down under. Richie recalled how his uncle’s mother-in-law, during a visit to Malta, told their mother that “you’ll find money on the road”, making it seem as though wealth came easily in Australia. But the reality was very different. “When I went to Australia, I had to work very hard,” Richie said. Sonny, too, had strong reservations. He had repeatedly said no to the idea of emigrating, but when Richie and their sister decided to go, he felt he couldn’t stay behind alone. The departure from Malta left a deep emotional mark on the family.

“When we went to get the ship, my father was there at the harbour,” Richie remembered. “He was crying, watching us three boarding the ship.” Sonny added that at that moment, he wanted to jump off the vessel. “Our father was different from our mother; he was an angel to us. He knew how to talk to us. When we did something wrong, he’d tell us to sit down and talk to us. Not like those fathers who start hitting you.”

Their childhood in Malta was deeply rooted in faith and family, even though their father was often away due to his work in the navy. “We grew up without him because he was in the navy,” Richie said. “He would come for one month leave and then get on a plane to England to board his ship for another two years.”

The brothers painted a vivid picture of pre-1960s Malta. Daily life centred around the church, school, and community. “The Malta I remember is completely different from the Malta of today,” Sonny recalled. “I’ve been away for 63 years, and it’s changed entirely.”

Richie described their daily routine with humour: Waking up early for church, eating porridge—if you dared to eat it—and then heading off to school. “If not, you’d give it to the cat,” he joked. After school, they’d play football in the street before heading back to church again. “We used to live more in the church than at home in those days.” They both observed how religious practices have changed. “The church used to be open from four in the morning until nine at night,” Sonny said.

Richie added that mass used to be held in Latin, and the priest would face away from the congregation. “We were looking at his back and didn’t even know who was celebrating the mass. Now it’s different, you can see what the priest is doing, and when he prays, we pray together.”

Before migrating, both brothers had stable jobs in carpentry. “We were working in Malta,” Sonny said. “We had settled down working with good jobs. We had nothing against Malta.”

That made starting over in Australia difficult. Richie worked long shifts, from 3pm to 11 pm at Arnold’s. “We had good money in those days, the ’60s,” he said. But when he returned to Malta briefly and resumed work, he found drastically lower wages. “They gave me just six pounds a week. I said to my wife, ‘It’s impossible to live here on six pounds a week. I’m going back to Australia.’” The brothers’ lives diverged after all three siblings married in the same year. “My sister married first in February, then Richie married in April, and me in October,” Sonny said. “The three of us in one go, we were the three stooges,” Richie joked.

While Richie’s second return to Malta went well, Sonny remained in Australia. The distance created a long absence between them. “When Richie came down the second time to Malta, I missed him terribly,” Sonny said. “My brother and I were always together. Wherever we went, to football, church; everywhere together.”

A pivotal moment came when Richie, then 21, received a letter calling him up for the Vietnam War. He was working the afternoon shift when the foreman handed him the letter. “I didn’t even open it,” he said. “I took it to my father and woke him up.

He read it and said, ‘You’ve been called to go to Vietnam. Tomorrow, you have to go downtown for an exam.’ He immediately said, ‘I’ll send you back to Malta.’ “And that was it.”

Sonny had a similar experience a year earlier but was ultimately rejected because his birthdate didn’t fall within the required range. “They called me exactly when I turned 21 because we were British subjects,” Richie said. One of the most emotional moments of their reunion came when they spoke about their father. Sonny recalled the last conversation he had with him. “It was about lunchtime on a Saturday. I called my sister, and she said, ‘Dad is here’. I spoke with him, and he told me he’d be coming to see me in Melbourne in another two weeks.”

His father mentioned he’d gone to the market that morning and bought lampuki fish. Sonny jokingly asked if he could send him a piece.

A few days later, Sonny received a phone call saying his father had passed away. He rushed back for the funeral. “When I was leaving to go back to Melbourne, my mother said, ‘There is some of the fish in the fridge that he didn’t eat before he died. I’m going to put it in a jar for you to take to Melbourne.’ I could not believe it—I had just asked if he could send me a piece of fish, and then I had to have that fish.”



Sonny said it took him years to process the loss. Richie nodded in agreement: “I can’t believe that we lost him. We never saw any harm from him.”

As they reminisced about the past and reflected on the present, both brothers acknowledged how much Malta has changed. Sonny said he never expected to return, but his daughter encouraged the visit.

He even travelled to Siggiewi, where his late wife had lived, for the first time.

Now, looking back on their paths, the brothers found comfort in being together again, despite the decades that passed. “I wish when I was young it was like this,” Sonny said. “Because if you wanted to work in those days, you had to work hard. But today, the young ones in Malta have very good opportunities.” Richie pointed out that today’s generation has far more access to education and work, including in other EU countries. “Before, if you wanted to work, you had to leave,” Sonny said. “Now they can stay, study, and travel. If they go abroad, they can come back within an hour.” With a career waiting for most graduates even before they finish their studies, the brothers agreed—there’s no need to chase life overseas anymore.

“We had no choice,” Richie said. “But today’s youth do. And they should stay.”

The two men who had been forced apart as young brothers sat together in the Malta they once grew up in, reflecting on their memories as they took in all the time they had together.

This article from Maltatoday was sent tus by **Bettina und Christian Launer Maltese German Association - Germany**



## H.E. HON JOHN AQUILINA

Ambassador of Malta  
in Brazil

Ambassador John Aquilina and Deputy Bernard Vella were delighted recently to welcome to Brasília His Lordship Vincent Costa, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Jundiaí,

São Paulo, Brazil. Bishop Costa, who was born in Birkirkara, Malta, came to Brazil in 1969, along with many other Maltese clergy who came to Brazil in the 50s and 60s. While in Brasília Bishop Costa participated in a meeting of the Commission of the Emeritus Bishops of the National Conference of the Bishops of Brazil (CNBB – Conferência Nacional dos Bispos of Brazil), which comprises 176 Bishops Emeritus. This Brasília meeting had a double purpose:

- (a) An evaluation of the activities made by the Commission during this current year;
- (b) The planning of the activities for the coming year of 2026. Ambassador John Aquilina said it was a great delight to meet up again with Bishop Costa whom he had first met in Jundiaí, São Paulo, in January. Also during that visit Ambassador Aquilina had met with several Maltese priests living in Brazil who had come to greet His Eminence Cardinal Mario Grech.

# Ranking the first 120 Maltese Surnames

A small island like Malta, having been conquered by so many different nationalities, is bound to have different surnames from various countries, leading to new surnames popping up in society. A recent post on the Facebook group Nostalgia Malta shows the ranking of the first 120 surnames to pop up in Malta.

The table below shows the ranking for the first 120 surnames:

1 BORG	21 CALLEJA	41 AZZOPARDI	61 BONELLO	81 CILIA	101 PULLICINO
2 VELLA	22 PORTELLI	42 PSAILA	62 FORMOSA	82 CURMI	102 AXISIA
3 FARRUGIA	23 GATT	43 VASSALLO	63 CASHA	83 TEUMA	103 GAFA
4 CAMILLERI	24 GRIMA	44 ZAHRA	64 CIANTAR	84 GRISTI	104 BAJADA
5 ZAMMIT	25 BUGEJA	45 SALIBA	65 ZERAFIA	85 BALZAN	105 PULIS
6 GRECH	26 MALLIA	46 CACHIA	66 TONNA	86 AZZOPARDI	106 ABDILLA
7 GALEA	27 MIZZI	47 AZZOPARD	67 DALLI	87 DINGLI	107 GRECH / GREG
8 CARUANA	28 BUSUTTIL	48 MAGRO	68 CHETCUTI	88 SAYD	108 FITENI
9 AGIUS	29 SAMMUT	49 MANGION	69 FRENDU	89 CAMENZULI	109 GERADA
10 CASSAR	30 ABELA	50 BARBARA	70 DARMANIN	90 PARNIS	110 CASSIA
11 ATTARD	31 GAUCI	51 MAMO	71 BONAVIA	91 CUMBO	111 RIZZO
12 MICALLEF	32 FALZON	52 BARTOLO	72 TANTI	92 CREMONA	112 CORDINA
13 MIFSUD	33 XERRI	53 BEZZINA	73 CALLUS	93 ABEJER	113 DELIA
14 SPITERI	34 XICLUNA	54 XUEREB	74 SANT	94 CATANIA	114 CIAPPARA
15 PACE	35 BUTTIGIEG	55 ZARB	75 FELICI	95 CARDONA	115 COLEIRO
16 MUSCAT	36 CAUCHI	56 CUTAJAR	76 DE BRINCAT	96 CUSCHIERI	116 SULTANA
17 BONNICI	37 AQUILINA	57 BUHAGIAR	77 BRIFFA	97 CINI	117 BIGENI
18 FENECH	38 ELLUL	58 DIMECH	78 CHIRCOP	98 GALDES	118 STIVALA
19 SCHEMBRI	39 TABONE	59 MERECIECA	79 PISANO	99 SACCO	119 SOLTANA
20 DEBONO	40 XIBERRAS	60 BALDACCHINO	80 SEICHEL	100 REFALO	120 XIRIHA

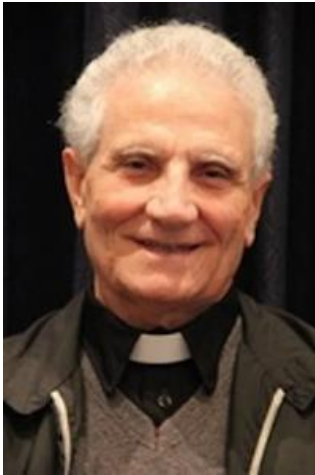
*Tony Buttigieg via Nostalgia Malta / Facebook*

[Borg](#) is at the top of leader board (obvs), with [Vella](#), [Farrugia](#), [Camilleri](#) and [Zammit](#) ranking in the top five local surnames. Ranking from six to 10 are surnames [Grech](#), [Galea](#), [Caruana](#), [Agius](#), and [Cassar](#).

Some surnames are listed as the old Semitic or Romantic versions of the words like [Xiberras](#) (Sciberras), [Xicluna](#) (Scicluna), [Soltana](#) (Sultana), [Abejer](#) (Ebejer), showing the influence of other languages on our local tongue, and how it's changed over the years. Other quite common surnames include [Attard](#), [Micallef](#), [Mifsud](#), [Spiteri](#), and [Pace](#).

Surnames such as [Gatt](#), [Calleja](#), [Mallia](#), [Mizzi](#), [Busuttil](#), [Falzon](#), [Xerri](#), [Cauchi](#), [Zahra](#) and [Ellul](#) are all featured in the top 50, while other less common ones such as [Cumbo](#), [Parnis](#), [Teuma](#), [Xiriha](#), [Stivala](#), [Ciappara](#), [Fiteni](#), [Cini](#), [Galdes](#), and [Gristi](#) rank towards the end of the list.



**MALTESE AMERICAN PRIEST AND HERO****FR. FRANK ZAMMIT mssp****Man of God and his people**

He was born to parents Carmelo and Felicita Zammit on September 8, 1935, in Paola, Malta. Father Zammit was one of seven children. He attended Paolo Public School, Malta; St. Aloysius Secondary School, Malta; St. Paul's College, Malta; and Corpus Christi College, Melbourne, Australia. St. George Preca (1880-1962), canonized June 3, 2007, was a humble Maltese priest devoted to our Blessed Mother.

Father Zammit said that "Everybody in Malta knew him." As a teen,

Father Zammit struggled between working in the dockyards and a persistent longing to enter seminary, so he sought the advice of Father Preca. Father Preca said, "You go to (the) dockyard now. If God wants you to be a priest, he'll call you out of the dockyard." Father Zammit worked in the shipyard for six years before entering seminary.

In 1956, he joined the Maltese Missionary Society of St. Paul where he made his novitiate and earned a degree in philosophy. He was then sent to Australia to finish his theology degree at Corpus Christ College in Melbourne, Australia. He was ordained July 23, 1966, for the Missionary Society of St. Paul. After Ordination, he served the people of God in Australia, Canada, and New Jersey. He arrived in Florida in 1973. Father Zammit became an American citizen in 1975.

His first assignment with the Diocese of Orlando was as Parochial Administrator of St. Paul Catholic Church, Leesburg. He then served the people of God as Parochial Vicar of St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic Church, Eustis; St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, Orlando; Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Daytona Beach; and Blessed Trinity Catholic Church, Orlando. He served as Administrator of St. Rose of Lima, Poinciana; St. Timothy Catholic Church, Lady Lake; St. Lawrence Catholic Church, Bushnell; and St John Vianney Catholic Church, Orlando. He was incardinated into the Diocese of Orlando in 1977. As Administrator he would make ready the parish for the pastor to be by collaborating with the staff to identify any concerns and bring them closer to Christ as one body through His enthusiasm and love for God. He also served as a U.S. Navy Chaplain; Chaplain for the Disney Cruise Lines; Knights of Columbus; and Florida Manor Nursing Home.

Father Zammit had a deep love and devotion to our Blessed Mother. He was the founder and coordinator of the annual Marian Rally. He established an endowment fund to support Catholic education with the Catholic Foundation of Central Florida in honor of Our Blessed Mother.

Father Zammit was a master of languages and spoke Arabic, Syrian, Maltese, Italian, English and Spanish. Of his priesthood, he said on his 50th jubilee, "I thank God for the priesthood and the people I serve who are so wonderful. I'm blessed to serve the people of God."

## HOW TO STUFF A MALTESE OLIVE ZEBBUG MIMLI

Maltese stuffed olives called zebbug mimli are a lovely little snack or appetizer. These stuffed green olives can be found at nearly every festive occasion. Żebbuġ mimli are large green stuffed olives with a tuna paste mixture! These salty olives are the perfect nibble to enjoy with a glass of Maltese wine.

In Malta, from a small private get together to a wedding to any celebration or event, a bowl of żebbuġ mimli is almost always there. These stuffed olives are the perfect appetizer to nibble on whilst drinking your favourite drink. Most commonly, they are served with a side of galletti, bigilla, Maltese bread, sundried tomatoes, Maltese ġbejna cheese, arjoli and white beans. Granted success! Stuffed olives can be found for sale from all around the island, all year round. However, they aren't that difficult to make at home. All that is needed is some patience to stuff every olive.

Żebbuġ Mimli – Stuffed Maltese Olives

### Ingredients

- 800 g olives
- 100 g tuna 1 can
- 1 slice bread without crust
- 2 anchovy fillets
- 1 tsp capers
- 4 garlic cloves
- 1/2 tsp chili flakes
- 1/2 tsp hot sauce
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1/2 tsp paprika
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- 1 tbsp mint chopped
- 1 tbsp parsley chopped
- 3 tbsp olive oil



### Instructions

1. In a blender, place the bread and pulse until it's all crumbs.
2. Add all the remaining ingredients except the olive oil and blend together. Gently stream in the olive oil and continue to blend until you get a smooth paste. At this stage, you can taste the mixture and see if any additional salt is needed. Be careful, not to over salt.
3. Fill a piping bag with the mixture. Take each olive and stuff the hollowed centre. Do not worry if the stuffing oozes out slightly.
4. Place the olives in a bowl, drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle some extra parsley on top. Mix well. Place in the fridge prior serving. Ideally, let the olives sit and marinate overnight before serving so that their flavour is more enhanced. We loved the stuffing which mak a spread on crackers as well.



## TikTok horror series *Greystanes* to spotlight Maltese-Australian culture and folklore



[Cinema Australia](#) / [May 12, 2023](#)

*Greystanes* creators Ryan Cauchi and Matt Ferro.

AACTA-nominated writer/director Ryan Cauchi and Matt Ferro (*The Matrix*, *Happy Feet*) have joined forces to create scripted Maltese-Australian horror drama series *Greystanes*, with 15 x 1- minute episodes to be released exclusively on TikTok. A recipient of Screen Australia, NZ On Air and TikTok's Every Voice initiative, the series is currently in production, for release

in October 2023.

Set in Western Sydney in 1995, *Greystanes* tells the story of 11-year-old Samantha and her older brother Marius. While visiting their Maltese grandmother during school holidays, the siblings discover a dark family secret and encounter Il-Haddiela, a sinister creature from Maltese folklore, connected to it. With their Nanna leading the way, the family must come together to fight the creature – and its curse. Under the scares and thrills, the series explores generational relationships, Maltese-Australian culture and the migrant Australian experience.

Currently in pre-production and filming later this month in *Greystanes*, NSW – a stronghold for the Maltese community – the series stars AACTA-nominated Maltese-Australian actress Frances



Duca (*Ali's Wedding*) as Nanna, young theatre star Chloe Delle-Vedove (Disney Theatrical Productions *Mary Poppins* and *Frozen*) as 11-year-old Samantha, and newcomer Tigran Tovmasian as her 17-year old brother Marius, alongside a largely Western Sydney-based cast and crew.

Series creator Cauchi, notes, "*Greystanes* is big on mystery, thrills and chills, while also giving voice to the Maltese-Australian community, which has gone largely unrepresented in Australian scripted content. It will celebrate the Maltese immigration experience as part of the story of Modern Australia the rich history of Maltese culture and folklore and its untapped horror film potential."

Cauchi is the recipient of the Michael Ajakwe Award for Innovation at Sydney Web Fest 2022, a 2022 Screen Producers Australia (SPA)/TikTok 'Got a Minute' finalist and a 2022 AACTA nominee for Best Digital Short Video. Loosely based on his own childhood – which happens to include a real-life curse in his mother's family! – Cauchi is a proud resident of Western Sydney and excited to be filming in *Greystanes*, where his own Maltese immigrant father grew up.

Writing and producing with Cauchi is Matt Ferro, the producer of the Academy Award-winning visual effects of *The Matrix*, associate producer of the Academy Award-winning animated film *Happy Feet*, a producer of the Frank Lowy documentary feature *What Will Become of Us*, and an executive producer of NBC Universal's top-rated series *Fashion Bloggers* and follow-up, *Style Squad*. As a writer/director, his *The Story of Three Sisters* opened the 2022 Jewish International Film Festival's Short Film Program.

The series is co-produced by Maltese-Australian actor, director and producer Julian Ramundi ( *Wellmainia*, *Back to the Rafters*) and line-produced by AACTA-nominated producer Tsu Shan Chambers (*Unsound*). Practical and creature effects are provided by eight-time Archibald finalist

and filmmaker Nick Stathopoulos and Lewis P. Morley, one of the special effects geniuses behind the infamous animatronic giant boar in the 1984 cult classic *Razorback*.

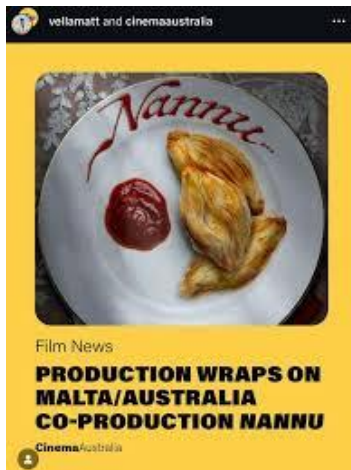
**Greystanes releases via three weekly episodes over five weeks, beginning on Halloween, 31 October 2023, exclusively on TikTok, at @GreystanesSeries. A short film version will enter into festivals globally through 2024.**

Visit the *Greystanes* social pages: Facebook (@Greystanes - Series), Instagram (@greystanes\_series) and Twitter (@Greystanes\_Seri).

## Production wraps on Malta/Australia co-production

### Nannu

[Cinema Australia](#) / [August 5, 2025](#).



Production has officially wrapped on new short film, *Nannu*, an intimate and emotionally charged cultural drama inspired by writer/director Matthew C. Vella's personal relationship with his late Maltese grandfather. Filming took place in Western Sydney in January 2025 and concluded in Malta in June 2025, marking a deeply symbolic collaboration between the two countries.

*Nannu* stars well known Maltese actor and two-time Malta TV Awards nominee Henry Zammit Cordina (L-Gharusa, Hbieb u Ghedewwa, Bizzilla, Il-Klinika) and Film Critics Circle of Australia award winner and AACTA-nominee actress Frances Duca (Ali's Wedding), and introduces nine-year-old newcomer Henry Stoakes. Rounding out the cast is Karina Summers, Mark Andrew, Nathan Camilleri and Charlie Cortis. The film is co-produced by Vella, Duca, Zammit Cordina, and Luke Agius (*The Undesirables*, *Go Figure*).



A rare Malta-Australia co-production, *Nannu* explores themes of intergenerational identity, heritage, and the immigrant experience. At its heart, *Nannu* is a story about how love and legacy survive across generations, even when traditions shift. A newly released promotional poster captures the film's unique metaphor: eating pastizzi with tomato sauce; a controversial food pairing in Malta but a

familiar staple for Maltese children raised in Australia.

"In Malta, dipping pastizzi in tomato sauce is unthinkable. But Aussie kids eat everything with sauce — meat pies, sausage rolls, you name it," says director Matthew C. Vella. "We're using this clash of culinary customs as a metaphor for how traditions change through immigration. It's a bit cheeky, a bit controversial, but ultimately about how culture and legacy adapt and lives on."

This project was funded by Arts Council Malta, Blacktown Arts as part of the 2024 Blacktown City Creative Arts Fund Program, and sponsored by Gato's Pastizzi.

With post-production now underway, the film is being positioned for submission to Academy Award® and BAFTA-qualifying festivals throughout 2026. *Nannu* aims to shine a spotlight on the under-represented Maltese-Australian experience, touching on themes of language, cultural pride, and family bonds.

**For updates, behind-the-scenes content, and screening announcements, follow Matthew C. Vella on Instagram: @vellamatt**



How do you like  
this jungle paradise?



Where are all the beautiful  
balconies gone?



# MALTA HAS CHANGED

## REACHING NEW HEIGHTS

THE MALTESE JOURNAL JUST HIT  
OVER 12000 SUBSCRIBERS AND  
SEVERAL OF THEM SEND IT TO  
THEIR RELATIVES AND FRIENDS  
THIS MAKES OUR JOURNAL UNIQUE