

# Basic Detail Report

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**00052226**

**Title**

Portable 'ON AIR' sign used by Lena Gustin

**Date**

1960s-1970s

**Medium**

Glass, timber, cables

**Dimensions**

Overall: 435 x 530 x 120 mm

**Name**

Sign

**History**

Maria Maddalena (Lena) Morelli was born in Dezzo di Scalve, Italy, on 9 July 1914. She obtained a teacher's diploma from the Istituto Magistrale Manzoni, Milan, and taught at schools in Salerno, Bergamo and Turin from 1937-1956. Dino Gustin, a journalist from Trieste, Italy, was born in 1919. He published short stories under the name Dino Gusteni as he considered the name Gustin sounded too foreign and not Italian. After World War II he organised variety shows and concerts in northern Italy. Lena and Dino married on 27 December 1940 and they had three children, two sons and a daughter. With war time deprivation costing the life of their first son, and conditions looking bleak in post-war Europe, Lena, Dino and their children Rosalba and Robert migrated to Australia on the Cogedar liner AURELIA in 1956. AURELIA had accommodation for 1,124 passengers and made four round trips per year from Italy to Australia until 1958. In 1959 it commenced a new service to Australia from Bremerhaven, West Germany. With a decline in the migrant trade to Australia in the late 1960s, AURELIA was refitted as a cruise ship, with accommodation for 470 passengers. In 1970 it was purchased by Chandris Cruises and renamed ROMANZA. In Sydney Lena taught Italian twice a week at the Ashfield Evening College. She also worked as a columnist for the Italian Catholic newspaper La Fiamma [The Flame], writing three columns per week: Salotto di Lena [Lena's living room], Lena Risponde [Lena replies] and Di Tutto un po [A little bit of everything]. In 1957 Lena pioneered foreign language broadcasting and women's radio journalism by producing and presenting the program Ora Italiana [Italian hour] with Dino on Sydney Catholic radio station 2SM. This was followed two years later by a daily radio program on 2CH, covering Italian News, Arrivederci Roma, Festival in Casa [Home festival], Musichiere [The musical hour] and Sorella radio [Sister radio]. The program offered advertising opportunities for Italian businesses and was one of the few media outlets through which Italian news was regularly reported. Dino produced Lena's radio programs, attracted advertising from Italian businesses and organised their many radio competitions which generated active participation from the Italian community. In 1959 Lena became president of the National Association Migrant Families (ANFE), established to assist

Italian migrants in matters of housing, employment, health, finance and taxation. Lena aimed "to get each family out of the hostels and into a house as quickly as possible." In 1965 songwriter Nino Cavallero paid tribute to Lena by penning the song 'Mamma Lena' (Mother of the Italians). The lyrics included 'Mamma Lena, you bring hope to our hearts and lessen our sorrows and nostalgia/You bring hope that we will see Italy again some day/Mamma Lena, please talk to me again and bring me hope that tomorrow will be better than today/Your sincere voice sounds like the voice of an angel/You are my mother who keeps me company in the night.' From March 1968 to July 1969 Lena was the first female editor of the Italian newspaper Settegiorni [Seven days]. Lena received numerous honours from the Italian and Australian governments, including Knight of the Italian Republic (1967), Member of the British Empire (1968), Commendatore (Dame), the highest award from the Italian Government (1999), and the Centenary Medal (2003). Lena Gustin died in Sydney on 21 September 2003. Dino Gustin died in 2004. The Mamma Lena and Dino Foundation was established in 2001 and today continues Lena and Dino's legacy of charitable work.