

Acceptance Speech by Bruno Grollo AO

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen.

You'll have to excuse me here. Building I'm comfortable with, but speaking is not my game, so I hope you don't mind if I read a few thoughts I've jotted down.

Firstly, I would like to thank Darren Steinberg and the Property Council of Australia for this tremendous honour. I am very pleased to be recognised, not only alongside my brother, but with such an eminent group in the Hall of Fame who have achieved so much in our industry.

I feel very fortunate standing here today. A lot of that good fortune I owe to my father who - in 1927 - left his home in Italy and came to Australia to make a new life. It was to be a very good decision.

He left Italy because he couldn't get a feed. His first ten years in this country were in the midst of the great depression. Much of that time he lived in a tent and moved around doing odd jobs as a woodchopper, working in quarries and laboring on dam projects. He got by, in part, by eating rabbits.

Dad started a small concreting business in the early 40s with one truck and a couple of men. I joined him as a keen and hungry 15-year-old - a desperado in some respects but absolutely determined to get ahead.

Rino joined the business 8 years later having stayed on at school and going on to study accounting. The two of us made a good team.

As we took over from Dad, I looked after winning and overseeing the building jobs and Rino was the numbers man looking after the office.

Over the years the business moved from concrete paving, to building swimming pools and then building civil engineering works and concrete structures for many of the major builders, of the time in Melbourne.

After the destruction of Darwin by Cyclone Tracy, Christmas 1974, we constructed 400 houses. After Darwin we began developing our own shopping centres, multi storey buildings and also undertaking major construction works for other developers.

It was a great privilege over some 50 years to have had the opportunity to play a part in shaping the city skylines, predominantly of Melbourne, but also in Sydney.

The Rialto, Eureka, 101 & 120 Collins Street and Crown Casino in Melbourne and No 1 Martin Place, Governor Philip and Governor Macquarie Towers in Sydney are some of the projects I'm particularly proud of.

With the Rialto – some people thought we were crazy to be developing the tallest building in the Southern Hemisphere at the wrong end of town. The risk was huge but I was confident we would be successful.

Now our children are taking the businesses their grandfather started in their own direction and very successfully making their own way.

I'm very proud of their achievements too.

I can remember as a young boy, about six years old, sitting on the verandah of our rented family home in Swanston Street Carlton.

I would watch as a Rolls Royce or a Hudson would cruise past on the street and I would dream of one day being successful enough that I might drive one of those.

In this lucky country you can pursue dreams like that and often achieve them...

But there are a few things you need to go your way.

A journalist in Italy some 10 or 15 years ago asked me "what was the secret of my success?"

I really didn't know what to say so I replied with the first thing that came into my head.

I said: "...hard work, good people alongside me and a bit of luck".

Later, when I thought about what I had said, I thought it was not a bad response except I should have added that being a desperado to succeed is also fundamental.

I think anyone who can put those ingredients together has a very good chance of success.

Thank you again for this wonderful honour and thank you to all of those who helped us along the way.

Good Luck, Good Health to all of you and have a great night.