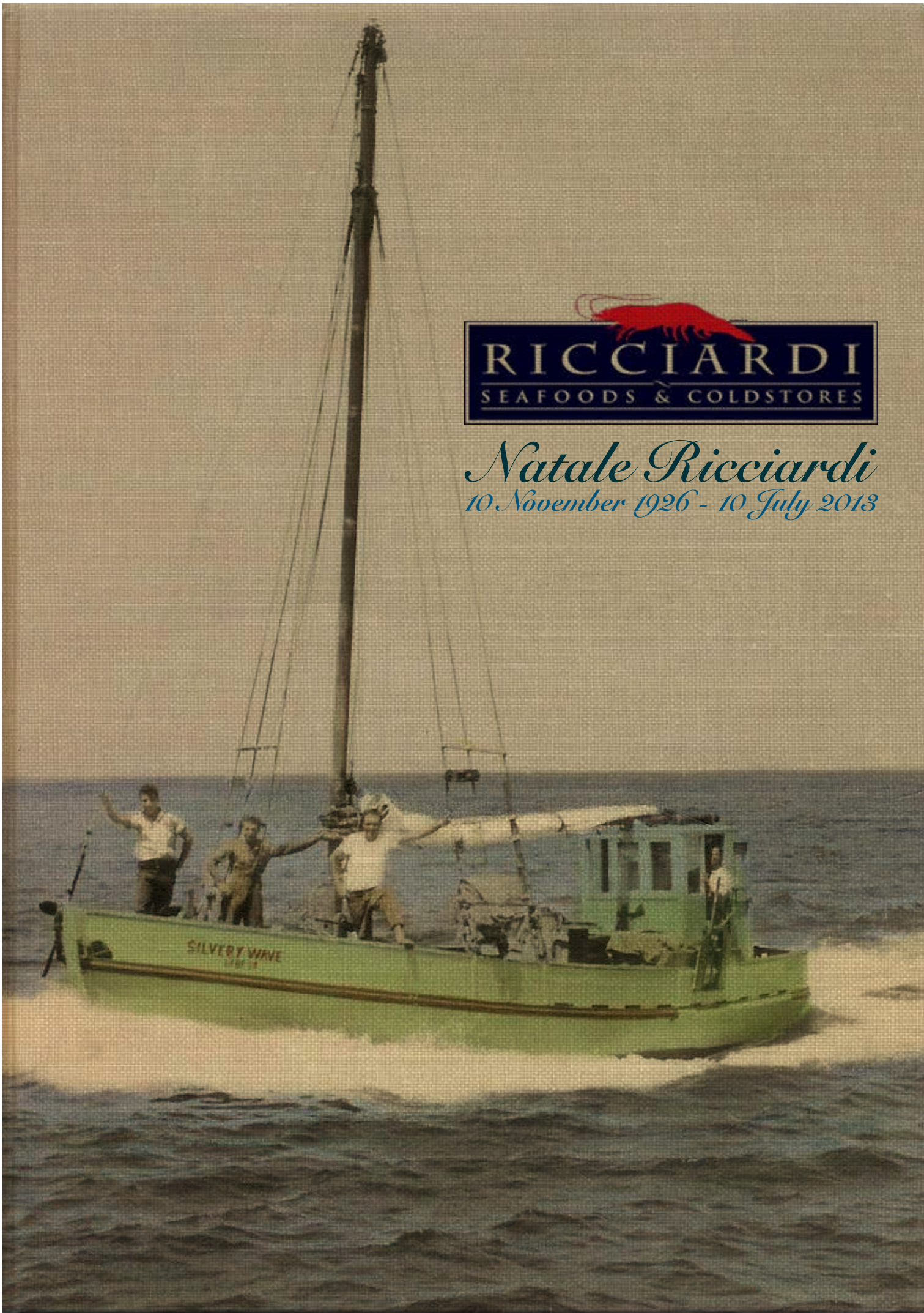




**RICCIARDI**  
SEAFOODS & COLDSTORES

*Natale Ricciardi*  
*10 November 1926 - 10 July 2013*





# *A great Australian fishing industry story*

Natale Ricciardi – the pioneer, the leader, the fisherman.

## *The year is 1949.*

A 22-year-old Natale Ricciardi leaves his home in the fishing village of Capo d'Orlando, Sicily and arrives in Fremantle with no money and not a word of English.

“ *He came with courage, intelligence and a dream.*  
*And a work ethic that matched his dream of creating a fishing business and a better life for his family in Australia.* ”

In his first few months he worked in the market gardens and then on the wharf, where he quickly learnt enough English to secure his first fishing job as a deck hand on a rock

lobster boat in Lancelin. In seven months as deck hand he had earned £1,100, which was a small fortune in those days – enough to buy land.

But more than anything, Natale wanted to bring his family to Fremantle, and so sponsored his brother Giuseppe to join him. Working together, Natale and Giuseppe were soon able to bring a third brother, Umberto, out from Sicily. (Within the next five years came their parents Ignazio (Ian) and Antonia, two brothers Salvatore and Cesare and two sisters Sarina and Luisa. The youngest sister Italia was married and stayed in Sicily.)

By 1953, just four years after leaving Sicily, Natale had sponsored his two brothers to Australia; purchased his first house in Manning Street, Fremantle; became a naturalised Australian and married; got his skipper's ticket and, together with



his brothers, bought a half-share in their first boat, the beautiful Silvery Wave, a 35ft vessel powered by sail and engine.

The Ricciardi family fishing business had been launched.



*Natale Ricciardi (centre) with brothers Umberto (left) and Giuseppe in Fremantle in the early 1950s*



*The fourth brother, Salvatore, (right) unloading sardines.*

Natale and his brothers worked hard, and quickly acquired half-shares in two more boats, Miss Maria and Florence Nightingale. They fished in summer for lobster out of Fremantle, and in the winter, Natale went to Shark Bay to fish for snapper and netting whiting, mullet and tailor from the beaches in Denham.

It wasn't long before the brothers had saved enough to buy out the partners in all three boats.

And soon they could afford to replace the Miss Maria with the Alba Marina, a larger vessel that also enabled them to fish for sardines, pilchards and herring to supply lobster bait.

It was a tough life. The boats were slow – the top speed was six to seven knots and there was no such thing as a GPS – charts and knowledge gained by experience were the keys to safe navigation. A typical day in the lobster season started at midnight and finished around five in the evening.

In 1966, the brothers built the *Sea Pearl*, a 64-foot timber vessel capable of fishing for lobster and rigged to trawl for prawns.



*Sea Pearl I*



With a small freezer hold and blast freezer below deck, Natale took the opportunity to venture off to the Gulf of Carpentaria and trawl for banana prawns. The *Sea Pearl* steamed all day and all night for 14 days, only stopping in Darwin for fuel and fresh supplies before crossing to Groot Island.

It was a grueling and dangerous voyage. Both the weather and the banana prawn season were bad; Natale decided that the future was in Shark Bay and its burgeoning prawn industry.

He negotiated a three-year contract with Norwest Whaling Company (now Norwest Seafood's) to trawl for prawns under their license. At the end of each lobster season, Natale sailed the *Sea Pearl* to Shark Bay to go prawning. He was away from home for many months.

In 1970 Natale and his brothers approached the then Minister for Fisheries, Graham MacKinnon, and applied for a Trawl license – it was granted on condition that it would be swapped for their lobster pot licenses.

In an interesting flash back, the lobster catch effort was up and the government was trying to reduce the number of licenses in the fishery. The Ricciardis decided to commit to the prawn industry and made a straight swap - their 200 lobster pots for a Shark Bay Trawl license.

The fleet of boats grew to include the *Rosaria Madre*, *Florence Nightingale 11*, *Sea Pearl* (Darwin) and *Sea Pearl 11*.



*Natale and Sylvia with their young family. R-L Ignazio (Ian), Antionetta, Natalie and Calogero (Claude). Natale had to sacrifice many months of family time while he fished in Shark Bay.*

By 1985, after more than 30 years in business together, it was time for the Ricciardi brothers to separate and for each family business to grow at their own pace.

Natale, with sons Ian and Claude, created Ricciardi Seafoods and Coldstores, while brothers Giuseppe and Umberto, with their immediate families, formed Ricciardi Ocean Products.

“ *The Ricciardis quickly became synonymous with the Shark Bay prawn fishery and prospered.* ”

## *Ricciardi Seafood and Coldstores*



*Premium and Matilda Bay*

In 1986 Natale and sons developed a cold storage facility in Bannister Street Fremantle, which included a processing and wholesale facility and a fresh fish retail outlet that also served fish and chips.

They also replaced the *Sea Pearl* (Darwin) with the state-of-the-art trawler Premium – a vessel that would ensure supply for their retail, wholesale and export markets. It was a world away from Natale's first vessel, the humble but beautiful, *Silvery Wave*.

(The family went on to secure a 50% of the *Nada*, which operated in the Northern Prawn Fishery, a 50% interest in Alliance which operated in the Kimberley and NPF and later the *Camden*, replaced by *Matilda Bay*, and *Mary Jane Stella* to work in Shark Bay).

They launched Premium Quality Seafoods, the new brand name for their seafood harvest, which was to be marketed to both the domestic and export markets.

The opening of the retail shop fulfilled one of Natale's lifelong passions to make his harvest available to everyone.

“ *He treasured the fisherman's destiny to provide fresh fish for his family and community.* ”

Natale saw the opening of the retail outlet as completing the circle of the fisherman's destiny to catch and supply.

The retail outlet was not as successful as hoped and was closed to concentrate on the processing, wholesale and exporting of the Premium Quality Seafood brand which thrived and expanded under the leadership of Ian and Claude.

However, today you can drop into the processing factory at Emplacement Crescent or the Mt Claremont Farmers Market on a Saturday and buy the fisherman's harvest direct ... something that still makes Natale proud.

Natale, now 86, and his wife, Sylvia, still live in the Manning Street house in Fremantle.



## What a difference one man can make

Natale has made a substantial positive difference to the Australian seafood industry:

1. Family businesses are the backbone of the Australian fishing industry. Natale, with his two brothers, created a successful family business based on a small fleet of lobster boats and later trawlers;

2. Over the years Natale provided employment to many young migrant and local fishermen;

3. In the 1950's he fished 12 months of the year, potting rock lobster, snapper fishing and net fishing;

4. In the 1960's he helped pioneer the prawn industry in Carnarvon, working away from his young family for many months at a time;

5. He successfully and amicably orchestrated the split of one successful family company into two successful family companies – another mighty achievement;



*Natale (on the left) catching Snapper in Carnarvon in the early 1950's*

6. In the mid 1980's in association with his sons Ian and Claude, formed Ricciardi Seafoods and Coldstores, and expanded the fishing business to incorporate processing, wholesaling and exporting;

7. Established the Premium Quality Seafoods brand; and

8. Empowered his sons to build on the solid foundations he laid and to successfully expand the business into the new century. The company's diversified business now employs close to 50 people.



Natale Ricciardi has worked, strived and thrived in the Western Australian commercial fishing industry for over 40 years.

“ *He is one of a small group who pioneered the prawning industry in Shark Bay.* ”

The living conditions were tough, the vessels were basic, the working hours long and it took him away from his young family for months.

The Ricciardi name is firmly carved into the history of the Western Australian fishing industry.

In the year 2000 Natale was a finalist in the medium / large business category of the National Australia Bank Ethnic Business Award.

It simply would not be so, but for a young man named Natale Ricciardi who left his homeland in Sicily more than 64 years ago to make a dream come true.





## A true leader's legacy

Natale's first sound leadership decision was made when he chose to venture out to Australia to make a new life.

*“He then set about working to get his brothers to join him. They formed a close bond and a shared vision; they created a fishing business based on a fleet, built boat by boat.”*

Natale wanted to be part of the new prawn industry in Carnarvon. His brothers backed his decision and together they swapped one of their lobster licenses to become major players in WA's growing prawn industry.

When time came to split the business it was hard but ultimately amicable and one successful family business, became two successful family businesses.

The brothers, who shared so much and worked so hard, are now all in their 80's and remain close mates.

Natale has instilled in his sons, Ian and Claude, a love of the fishing industry and a commitment to his work ethic.

Together they have built on the foundations their father laid; the Ricciardi family business continues to flourish.

The fishing division has continued to prosper along with the processing, wholesaling and exporting divisions; they have entered into a joint venture with the Paino family to construct the Fremantle City Coldstores, and with the MG Kailis Group to establish - One Sea Pty Ltd - that delivers fresh Rottneet Island scallops and prawns to the local market; they support the MSC program to ensure the sustainability of their lifelong trawl interest in Shark Bay and are playing a major role in pioneering abalone aquaculture in Augusta.

Natale Ricciardi is a man with vision and integrity, a pioneer of the prawning industry who laid the foundation of the Ricciardi family fishing dynasty.



Ian, Natale and Claude Ricciardi

## Natale:

### Respected by colleagues, loved by his family

**MG Kailis General Manager Fishing and WA Fishing Industry Council Director, Clayton Nelson said:**

*I feel privileged to know Natale Ricciardi. I salute not only his pioneering spirit, his leadership and the legacy he created, but also, Natale, the gentleman, so greatly respected in the fishing industry he will leave only friends and admirers.*

**Former Fremantle Mayor, Peter Tagliaferri, in his letter of support talk of Natale's contribution to the Fremantle community and the industry.**

*The fishing community of Western Australia would be the poorer if Natale Ricciardi had not migrated to Australia, then developed new fishing grounds, new ways of fishing and value adding to this basic commodity.*

**Well-known Fremantle fishing identity, Claude Basile, OAM, knows Natale not only as one of 608 names recorded on the Fremantle Fishermen's Memorial Jetty but also as a friend. He has written a letter of support in which he says:**

*Natale was a good fisherman and a good man.... he started with nothing and built a very successful business. I am very happy, and proud, to support Natale Ricciardi's nomination for the Michael Kailis Award.*



Natale Ricciardi the proud fisherman

**Ian Ricciardi says of his father:**

*I was 19 years old and on a study break from WAIT (now Curtin University) when I went fishing to help my father in Shark Bay and ended up staying for 4 years. There, I found out who my father really was, while fishing along side with him. That was my best education.*

*Discipline and hard work were a given. Dad was always fair and upfront with his crew; everyone pitched in 'till all the work was done.*

*I learnt the ropes ... fishing skills, refrigeration, engineering and navigation from my father as well*

*as cooking ... my father was the best cook in the fleet, on good weather there would always be one or two boats moored behind us wondering if Natale was cooking cuttlefish with black spaghetti.*

*Dad has given us the opportunity and support to take the fishing business to different levels. His experience and advice throughout has been a guiding light ... something that we and our children will always cherish.*





Natale (right) had a life-long friendship with Sam Paino (dec) one of the founders of Sealanes.

**Claude Ricciardi says of his father:**

*My father's knowledge of the seafood industry was invaluable in the early days of our family opening our fresh fish shop in Fremantle.*

*He would be up before sunrise waiting outside for me to come and pick him up to go to the fresh fish market auctions. During these early mornings he would teach and guide me with his lifetime of knowledge of the sea and make sure I knew exactly how to choose the freshest of what was on offer.*

*He loved being around all the fisherman and fishmongers at the market, always enjoying a good conversation about what was happening around all the boats and other shops.*

*When we were back at our shop he would love to spend time filleting the fish and chatting to all the customers. I learned a lot about my father during this time, I saw his passion for the seafood that we chose and for his desire to bring the produce back for our customers and for them to fully enjoy the fish they were buying to eat.*

*I also saw the respect he was shown by the other fisherman and mostly by our customers who would love to hear all the stories he could tell them about his lifetime at sea.*

*What a privilege it has been to learn from a master fisherman, my father Natale.*

## Reference letter

Peter Tagliaferri

04/06/2013

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN,

I have known Natale Ricciardi for most of my life and have maintained a close contact throughout the years, starting from the early 80s in Fremantle.

I was a councillor in the years 83-87 for the City of Fremantle and was involved with the setting up of the Sister City relationship with Molfetta and that is when I came into direct contact with Natale Ricciardi as he was involved with the City and setting up the Sister City with Capo D'Orlando. Some years previous, connecting his former home to his current home in Fremantle.

The main driver were his place of birth but in particular his fishing connections and life which are woven in both communities. This connection formed part of the unique fabric of Fremantle.

I then some years later when I was president of The Fremantle Italian Club was further connect with Natale Ricciardi as he would be again a very active member, sponsor and advisor to things happening to the fishing community of which the club was heavily based on and finally built close to the water front due to Natale. The club was going to be built in Jandakot as some as wanted, but the Ricciardi family argued that the club had a connection to the large fishing community and as they say the rest is history, as the club was then built on Marine Terrace, directly opposite the fishing jetty.

I then had further connection to Natale Ricciardi as I was then elected as Mayor in 2001 and 2005 and maintained contact with Natale on fishing matters and concerns that affect the fishing community. During more than 30 years of knowing Natale Ricciardi, I learnt of his great endeavours and love of the sea, and in particular fishing whether it be for Cray fish, bait fish, prawning, abalone and everything in between.

Fishing was not a glamorous occupation entailing with danger, long hours, away from home for long periods of time and the risk of poor returns. These factors seem to have driven Natale to strive for excellence and breaking new ground in the industry, from valuing adding, to direct exporting and finding new markets and finding new products to sell.

There are many articles written on the exploits endeavours, but I will leave those to others to explore and list. This will stand as a further testament to the hard work, ethics and love of the sea and his new home Fremantle.

The fishing community of Western Australia would be the poorer if Natale Ricciardi had not migrated to Australia, then developed new fishing grounds, new ways of fishing and value adding to this basic commodity. His endeavours stand the test of time and his sons have continued on with his endeavours and including to create a new enterprise across Western Australia in the fishing industry.

I have no hesitation in recommending or supporting a nomination for Natale Ricciardi for the Michael Kailis leadership award, as he scores highly in the four judging criteria:

1. The person has made a substantial positive difference to the seafood industry
2. The person's contribution has been sustained over many years
3. The person has demonstrated sound leadership by setting a vision and empowering other to achieve it
4. The person is highly respected by industry colleagues.

Regards,

Peter Tagliaferri J.P.  
5 Annie Street, Beaconsfield 6162



## *Reference letter*

– Claude Basile OAM

4 June 2013

ATTENTION: 2013 WAFIC Awards Judges

NATALE RICCIARDI

I write to you in support of Natale Ricciardi's nomination for the Michael Kailis Award in the 2013 WAFIC Awards.

Like my family, and so many other Italian families who settled in Perth after World War 2, Natale was born in Capo d'Orlando in Sicily. A special town that was commemorated in the naming of Capo d'Orlando Drive, the road that leads many commercial lobster fishermen to their boat each day in Fremantle's Fishing Boat Harbour.

In 2005 I chaired a committee that launched the Fishermen's Jetty, featuring two bronze sculptures and the names of 608 fishermen who pioneered the fishing industry in Fremantle. Natale, along with his brothers Giuseppe and Umberto, are among the 608 names, and on the opening day Natale was one of the small group of "old timers" to whom we paid a special tribute and presented to the Premier. Sadly, Natale is the last surviving member of the old timers.

There is no question that he was one of the early pioneers of the fishing industry. He started in the lobster fishery, and then decided to swap his lobster licences to work in Carnarvon after they discovered prawns.

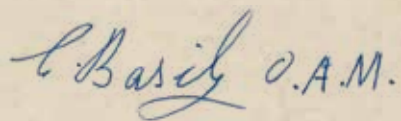
In the early days I remember the Ricciardi's had four boats...the Miss Maria, Florence Nightingale, Albamarina and the Silvery Wave. For a couple of seasons, while Natale was in Carnarvon, I skippered the Silvery Wave fishing for lobster.

Natale and his brothers have made a big impact in the fishing industry and where ever you go you are likely to meet an Ian Ricciardi!

Natale was good fisherman and a good man. He helped to pioneer the fishing industry, in particular the prawning industry. He started with nothing, and built a very successful fishing business that still thrives today; he loved his family and one by one helped his extended family settle in Perth for a new life filled with opportunity.

I am very happy, and proud, to support Natale Ricciardi's nomination for the Michael Kailis Award.

Yours sincerely,



Claude Basile

*The end*



