

# Canberra's colour and style

Leading hairdresser Emilio Cataldo stands up for his city and his profession.

**E**milio Cataldo thought about becoming an accountant, but in his case the numbers just did not stack up. "I thought it would be boring," he says, and wanted something more creative. Hairdressing offered a dual attraction — he would work with his hands, "and with the opposite sex!" As a young man, the latter was particularly appealing.

Today, he is the creative director of Cataldo's, one of Canberra's most respected hair salons, established by his father, Giuseppe, in 1965. He and his brother, Angelo, are both award-winning hairdressers with Emilio recently named ACT Hairdresser of the Year. He was also a finalist in the Australian Hair Fashion Awards Australian Hairdresser of the Year.

He has been in the industry for more than 20 years and knew from the start of his training he'd made the right choice.

"On the very first day we did finger waves. The teacher picked up my mannequin head and said, 'This is the way to do it.'" He was pretty sure then that he had the knack.

"I really love it. It is constantly changing, keeps me young and looking for new things. Being able to predict future trends is exciting. And you get a buzz out of seeing your work in international magazines."

His work has featured in *International Hairdressers Journal*, *InStyle*, *marie claire* and is on the cover of the current edition of *Passion International Hair Magazine*.

Hair trends follow fashion. "We look at emerging trends in fashion, pick up on that attitude and create the hair accordingly," he says.

His ACT title-winning Bianca collection was inspired by romance and freedom. Cuts encourage softness and texture while colour is glossy with hidden sections of contrasting or complementary tones peeping through. Hair is windswept and unstructured. And curls are back.

Cataldo says one of the biggest changes during his career has been the move away from the "weekly set" — the low-maintenance permanent wave.

"For the past few years there has been much more colour. It is such an important accessory to the hair style. It is the make-up for the hair."

People no longer get a colour just to cover the grey — they do it to flaunt their individuality. Colouring was now 50 per cent of his business.

"Sometimes it is in hidden panels, sometimes it is exposed, sometimes you just catch a glimpse of it."

As for the curls, they, together with textures, are "coming through in a big way, with a very relaxed feel to the curls".

Current hair styles were a lot more open to individuality.



the waxed, wet look is out. His salon saw a combination of people: those who knew exactly what they wanted and others who knew they could trust him and were guided by what he thought. For the latter, he STILL needed to understand their self image.

Generally, clients were happy to change their styles. "They are more accepting of quirky things, such as a fringe which is asymmetrical," he says. "It's like fashion, there is not just one skirt length."

He says the standards of Canberra salons is high. "We are a force to be reckoned with. Because Canberra is so small, we all work harder. I am very proud to come from Canberra, and am proud to help put it on the style map."

And it's not just Canberra which is making its mark. He says Australian hairdressers are far ahead of those internationally, but the industry is not doing itself justice.

"There is a shortage of hairdressers world-wide, which is indicative of how people look at the profession."

He says there is an attitude that hairdressing is for those "who are not very bright" at school.

"There is a lot of pressure from parents wanting children to do tertiary studies and it's not always the best option.

"It's so sad; it's so satisfying to do something creative like hairdressing ... the career path is endless, you could be a stylist, colourist, manager, educator, session stylist ... and there is always the opportunity to travel."

He says the industry needs to do more to showcase the work of its top stylists.

"We have very bright young people who are not only creative but are able to communicate with people at different levels. We are just not quite marketing ourselves right."

Cataldo says the job also offers the chance to put some brightness into a person's day.

"Getting the right style has an enormous effect on