

THE C.D.M.A. AUSTRALIA  
Catholic Dutch Migrant Association

This association was founded in Sydney on 17-8-61 with the aim to assist the Catholic migrant chaplains with their work among the Dutch in N.S.W. This work consisted mainly of finding work and accommodation for newly arrived immigrants, but assistance was also given with acquiring finance.

Australian solicitors provided legal assistance on an honorary basis. For many years the C.D.M.A. had its own St. Vincent de Paul conference. Organisation of religious services, retreats and study weekends for families also formed an important part of its work.

The C.D.M.A. is one of the main welfare organisations in the Dutch community. Its services are not restricted to its own members but is provided for all those in need. Close co-operation with other welfare organisations such as the P.D.B.S., the Queen Wilhelmina Benevolent Fund and St. Vincent de Paul has been maintained over the years. When "Neerlandia" started its member drive linked to cheap group travel, the C.D.M.A. and the Netherlands Society in Illawarra were party to the 'Link'.

Since 1970, fully independent branches have been established in Melbourne, Geelong, and Gippsland in Victoria, Canberra, Brisbane, and in N.S.W. South Coast & Tablelands and Macarthur District. The original C.D.M.A. is called C.D.M.A. Australia (N.S.W.).

Although welfare work is still the main objective of this association, the emphasis has shifted to work among the ageing members of the community. In 1977 a vigorous programme commenced to avert the loneliness and despair of so many of the elderly, with the result that some 250 -300 people have regular get-togethers (instuiven) in 8 areas of Sydney. Two substantial grants for this work were received from the Queen.

Over the years, several grants were obtained from both State and Federal departments for its welfare work. Some of these came from the Ethnic Affairs Commission and others from the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs. The monthly paper "Het Kompas", while keeping members informed of its activities, also publishes articles of general interest. This paper has received grants from the Ethnic Affairs Commission and the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs.

Because of its special character, the C.D.M.A. only occasionally provides its members with social events like dance evenings and the like. Its main source of income is the annual membership fee.

There is a special night only once a year, "De Bonte Avond", which is a night of dancing and variety. The 20th anniversary in 1981 began with a National Conference of C.D.M.A.'s in March. In June the well-known St. Gregory Choir from Melbourne came to Sydney for a choral concert and the celebrations finished with an Anniversary Ball in September.

The National Conference in Sydney had Drs. Jos Van Campen, Director of Catholic emigration in Holland, as guest speaker. The first Conference took place in Melbourne in 1980 when Bishop Th. Zwartkruis, now deceased, was present. The third Conference was held in 1983 in Canberra.