



SOCIETÀ DANTE ALIGHIERI

IL MONDO IN ITALIANO

COMITATO DI CANBERRA

Dante Alighieri Society of Canberra



1957 - 2017

*Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita
i primi sessanta anni*

*In the middle of our life's journey
the first sixty years*





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16 June 2017

Image on the front cover - Dante in a dark forest - is from a reproduction of Gustave Doré's illustrations of the *Divine Comedy*



Acknowledgments

The compilation of this brief history of the Dante Alighieri Society was undertaken by former VP Yvette Alberti Devlin who availed herself of painstaking research carried out by Sandra Catizone, and of interviews conducted with the architect Enrico Taglietti, Emeritus Professor John Molony, Wal Costanzo and Ottavio Bagozzi. The draft was checked by various people involved in the activities of the Dante Society starting from 1970, including Magda Damo, Myriam Bonazzi and Franco Papandrea.

The research was based on the relevant documentation held in the Society's archives, and details provided by Dante's headquarters in Rome, by Marie Ciano and Yvette Alberti Devlin. We regret any errors or omissions due to a lack of precise and reliable information.

La stesura di questa breve storia della Dante è stata curata dalla ex VP Yvette Alberti Devlin che si è valsa di accurate ricerche effettuate da Sandra Catizone, e di interviste condotte con l'architetto Enrico Taglietti, l'Emeritus Professor John Molony, Wal Costanzo e Ottavio Bagozzi. La bozza è stata controllata da varie persone coinvolte nelle attività della Dante a partire dagli anni '70, compresi Magda Damo, Myriam Bonazzi e Franco Papandrea.

Le ricerche si sono basate su tutti i documenti pertinenti reperibili negli archivi della Società, e dati resi disponibili dalla sede centrale della Dante, da Marie Ciano e Yvette Alberti Devlin. Ci scusiamo per eventuali errori dovuti alla mancanza di dati precisi e attendibili.

**Robert Andriolo's contribution in support
of the printing of this publication is greatly appreciated.**



I warmly congratulate the Dante Alighieri Society of Canberra on achieving the important milestone of 60 years of uninterrupted community service, a record unsurpassed by any other Italian community-based organisation in the Australian national capital. Starting as a small association of admirers of Italian culture, the Society has gradually become the most prominent vehicle for the promotion of Italian language and culture in the Canberra region. As a key component of the network of Dante Alighieri Societies in Australia, its influence is more far-reaching.

At a time when the viability of many community associations is under threat, the enduring success of Dante Alighieri Society instils a sense of hope and pride in the local Italian community. The Italian Diplomatic Mission and the Dante Alighieri Society have enjoyed cordial and mutually fruitful relations ever since the founding of the Society, which predates the formal establishment of the Embassy in 1958. There have been numerous occasions of successful close collaboration and joint initiative and I look forward to many more opportunities to work together in the pursuit of our shared goal of promoting Italian language and culture.

I take this opportunity to express a deep appreciation of the Dante Alighieri Society's dedication and commitment to community service over the past six decades. I am sure the Society's promotion of Italian language and culture will continue to make its mark on Canberra's cultural diversity. I extend my very best wishes to the Society for a bright future full of success and satisfaction.



The Ambassador of Italy
H.E. Pier Francesco Zazo

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Pier Francesco Zazo".



A bird's eye view of the DMV concert at the High Court of Australia - 2014



Maestro Francesco Sofo



DMV at Festa Italiana 2016



The popular 3 Tenors of the choir - Sam, Giovanni and Livio



Dante Musica Viva performs in a park at the 2016 annual picnic of the Fogolar Furlan



Dante Musica Viva during its 2013 concert

Preface

Dante Alighieri Society: Six decades of enrichment of Canberra's cultural landscape

The Dante Alighieri Society of Canberra is the local node in the international network of some 500 autonomous societies dedicated to the diffusion of Italian language and culture. Based in Rome, the Dante Alighieri Society was founded in 1889 by the poet Giosuè Carducci, the 1906 Nobel Laureate for Literature. The first Australian Dante Alighieri Society was established in Melbourne in 1896 followed soon after by the establishment of the Sydney Society where a prestigious Italian language school had been operating since 1890.

The Canberra Society was founded in 1957 when our city was at the beginning of its transformation into the national capital, Lake Burley Griffin was only a recommendation, the population stood at 39,000 and most of the public service was still located in Melbourne. As far as we can ascertain, it was the first Italian-related community association established in Canberra. It predates the establishment of the Italo-Australian Club (1963) and the many Italian regional associations set up by Italian migrants settling in the Canberra region in the late 1950s and 1960s.

This booklet presents a historical summary of the Society's journey from a small group of people getting together regularly to nurture a common interest in Italian culture to a prominent community-based association.

Information on the early days of the Society is scarce, but there are examples of interactions with the wider community such as Sir Keith Hancock's 5 September 1961 address to the society entitled "Rome; caput mundi and Italian Capital" and the Society's display at the then newly opened Hughes Community Centre mentioned in the *Canberra Times* of 8 May 1964. The first Italian language courses for adults began in 1972 and on 12 August 1979 the Society was again mentioned in the *Canberra Times* in connection with a 24-hour "discomarathon" at Dickson College to raise money to buy books on Australian themes to send to children in Italy.

Starting in the late 1990s, more active engagement with the wider community led to rapid growth of the Society's membership and of its language and cultural offerings. The growth continued in the first decade of the third millennium and propelled the transformation of the Society into today's prominent local Italian community-based association dedicated to the celebration and enrichment of Canberra's cultural diversity. The Society has also become a major and influential link in the network of Dante Alighieri societies promoting Italian language and culture in Australia.

Looking ahead, to continue to play a major role in the promotion of Italian language and culture the Society needs to adapt to the rapid societal changes being fuelled by the digital age. Adapting to, and embracing, new technologies, including social media, is a particular challenge that needs to be addressed to bolster engagement with younger generations. While the threats should not be underestimated, the achievements of the past 60 years suggest the Society is well placed to confront its future challenges with confidence.

Dr Franco Papandrea

President

Dante Alighieri Society of Canberra Inc

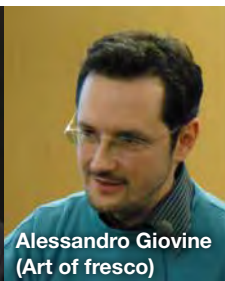
Some of the Cultural Event Presenters



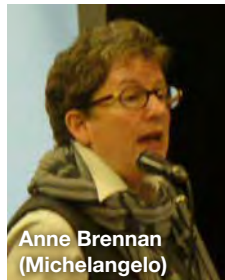
Adriana Diomedi
(Dante)



Adriano Tedde
(Risorgimento)



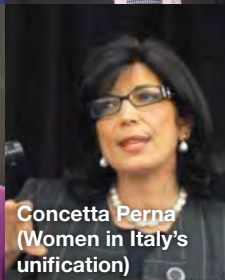
Alessandro Giovine
(Art of fresco)



Anne Brennan
(Michelangelo)



Chris Latham
(Puccini)



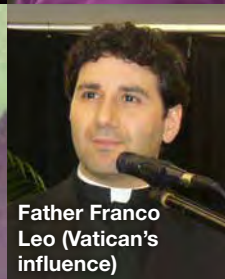
Concetta Perna
(Women in Italy's
unification)



David Wilson
(Galileo)



Elisabetta Nadalutti
(The '60s and '70s)



**Father Franco
Leo** (Vatican's
influence)



Gino Moliterno
(Boccaccio)



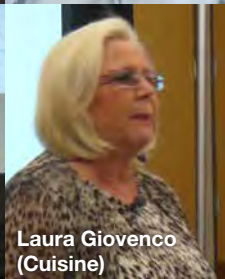
Gordon Bull
(Caravaggio)



Grazia Micciche
(Botticelli)



Jeff Brownrigg
(S. Italian ancient
pottery & Dale
Trendall)



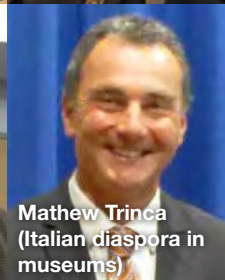
Laura Giovenco
(Cuisine)



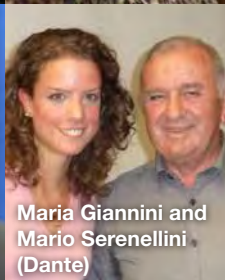
Michael Alder
(Roman empire)



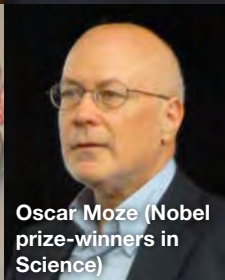
Mark O' Connor
(Shakespeare's
Italian-ness)



Mathew Trinca
(Italian diaspora in
museums)



**Maria Giannini and
Mario Serenellini**
(Dante)



Oscar Moze (Nobel
prize-winners in
Science)

THE DANTE ALIGHIERI SOCIETY OF CANBERRA CELEBRATES ITS 60TH BIRTHDAY

The origins of the Dante Alighieri Society

In the year 1889 Giosuè Carducci, Nobel Prize winner for literature, founded the Dante Alighieri Society with the aim of promoting Italian language and culture throughout the world.

The Dante Alighieri Society (DAS) of Canberra

The DAS of Canberra was founded on 29 June 1957 with the aim of “promoting Italian culture”. Its teaching activities to advance the Italian language began many years later.

Regular readers of the *Dante Review* will be well aware of the Society’s objective “to preserve and disseminate Italian language and culture”. As noted and emphasised in a 1995 article in the *Dante Review* by John Molony, President of the DAS for some twenty years, the Society has an enduring commitment to “preserve and maintain the immense cultural heritage of Italian, whether it be national or regional”.

The DAS of Canberra is part of the International Network of more than 500 “Independent Local Committees”, 400 of which are outside Italy.

The DAS became an incorporated association in 1999. The society is an independent, non-profit organisation whose income and property are applied solely towards the promotion of its objectives. All its members are volunteers and the Society receives little, if any, financial support from the DAS headquarters in Rome. Its primary ‘business’ activity is to promote, support and expand its language courses.



Foundation President
Professor A.D. Trendall
in residence at La Trobe
Univesity from 1967

A Review of the Society's history

The first Committee of the DAS of Canberra was constituted in 1957 at the initiative of the renowned expert in classical antiquity Professor A.D. Trendall, “Master of the House” of University College (later becoming the Australian National University - ANU). Honorary President was the Ministro d'Italia (head of the then diplomatic delegation which preceded the establishment of the Italian Embassy in 1958) S.E. Silvio Daneo, the actual President Prof. Trendall, Vice-President the historian Prof. Keith Hancock (who wrote a book on Ricasoli and the Risorgimento), Secretary the architect Enrico Taglietti and Treasurer Mrs Passmore, wife of Prof. John Passmore.

Committee members were: W. Butler; Sir Allen Brown, Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet; Prof. K. Masterman, Associate Professor of Classics at the University College of Canberra; and Lady Carrington, wife of the British High Commissioner in Australia.

Prof. Trendall was unanimously elected President at the first general meeting of members held at University College.

Taglietti, the only Italian on this first committee, had arrived in Australia in 1955. He recalls that in those initial years the focus of the committee was on arts and culture, rather than language. The cultural activities were held at University House.

In the years that followed, respected academics were invariably elected to the position of President: Prof. E. Koch-Emmery (1962); Prof. K. Masterman (1963); Prof. R.C. Wasteman (1966); Prof. F. Rinaldi in 1969 and again in 1970, in appreciation of his energy and ability to inspire; Prof. J. Molony (1976 and again in 1994); Prof. J. Lo Bianco (1998); and Prof. F. Papandrea, from 2004 until today.

At the beginning the DAS was neither seen, nor felt to be, an organisation easily accessible to a wider public because the Committee was in large part made up of eminent individuals such as academics, or those belonging to important institutions, and all the activities took place at either the university or the Italian embassy. Emeritus



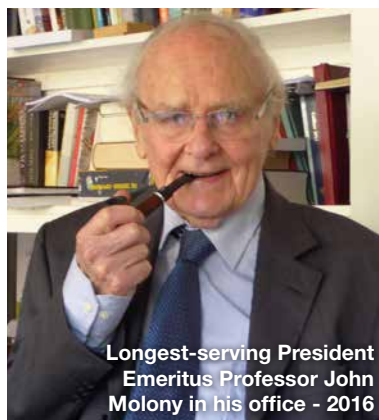
**The bust of Enrico Taglietti
sculpted in 2010 by Camilla
De Martino, wife of the then
Italian Ambassador**

Prof. Molony acknowledged that such aspects inhibited wider participation of members of the Italian community, which at the time was composed mainly of workers and tradesmen. To facilitate greater community involvement, he actively sought to transfer DAS activities to the Italo-Australian Club that had been established in 1963. According to Molony “the wonderful” Lio Pancino, Secretary and Treasurer from 1970 to the beginning of 1982, was the driving force for the relocation. It was Pancino who set up classes in 1972 and coordinated them until 1987.

And it was Lio Pancino who, assisted by others, in 1972 organised an entire week of the Dante Society in Canberra – “the Dante Alighieri

National Summer School” – in which more than 300 people participated from all over Australia. The activities planned for that week included accelerated language courses, an exhibition of Italian painters at the National Gallery and art classes, two concerts including one with the pianist Romola Costantino at the School of Music and a dinner for 400 people at the ANU.

Lio also acted as ‘liaison officer’ responsible for securing guest speakers for the meetings of the Society and for organising social activities. Furthermore, in 1973 it was he who launched the monthly *Dante Review*.



**Longest-serving President
Emeritus Professor John
Molony in his office - 2016**

Molony stated categorically that “it is no exaggeration to say that for several years the continued existence of the DAS rested in the hands of Mr Pancino” — an assessment confirmed by Wal Costanzo who for several years was a member of the committee during that period.

Myriam Bonazzi was deeply involved in the DAS and more general Italian cultural activities in the '70s and '80s when, as a member of the Committee, she held the position of either Secretary or Vice-President. Magda Damo should also be mentioned. From 1980 to 2003 she contributed extensively to the Society in a variety of ways such as: offering her house for concerts and for Italian classes, including conversation classes; setting up and managing a library with books donated by the Italian government and others; and serving as Vice-President from 1994 until 2003.

Another prominent person was Ottavio Bagozzi, Secretary for five years in the '90s. In an interview with Yvette Devlin in July 2016 he recalled that at his arrival the Dante Society had neither office nor archives and few paying members. Between 1992 and 1993 he started the first official evening of conversation classes and, thanks to three weeks of publicity with the *Canberra Times*, 70 people immediately enrolled. Bagozzi himself, his wife Maria and other members of the committee were the primary leaders of the conversation groups. A free classroom was made available at the ANU where formal Italian lessons were conducted, with 18 paying students in attendance at the first lesson.

Subsequently, thanks in particular to an \$18,000 Italian government grant, Ottavio was able to open an office of the DAS in a room rented to the ComItEs (Committee for Italians Abroad) by the Italo-Australian Club, and equipped it with a computer, camera and a library. He also employed a part-time office worker.

Ottavio Bagozzi recalled that during that period cultural evenings such as the Festival of Italian Song were held at the Damo family residence. Some lectures, such as one by Prof. Molony on Raffaello Carboni (Eureka Stockade) were also held, and some activities were organised to promote Italian cuisine.

It was during the mid '90s that ComItEs, with the aim of improving the offering of Italian courses to the public, urged a clear separation of roles in the provision of language courses: adult classes to be provided by the Dante with CIAC (Comitato Italo-

Australiano di Canberra), which was established in 1972, focusing on the teaching of Italian in schools. Such a specialisation of roles was of significant assistance to the Dante.

Backed by the President Joseph Lo Bianco, and assisted by the committee, Bagozzi organised the first national conference of Australian Dante Alighieri Societies, which was held in Canberra in 1999.

Franco Papandrea remembers that Dante's resurgence in the 1990s was aided by the dedication of several other people, especially Joe Lo Bianco, Sante and Loredana Modesti, and Hugo Toro. Sante Modesti, a professional graphic artist, in particular worked assiduously 'behind the scenes' without ever holding a prominent position on the committee. His contribution was recognised by his election to life membership of the Society. The cloth banner with the beautiful hand-painted image of Dante still used by the Society as part of its promotional displays at public events is one of Sante's enduring contributions.

Papandrea recalls as well that in the early 2000s the Society experienced a difficult financial period. Revenues, mostly from the language classes, were insufficient to cover expenditures, and were it not for grants from the Italian government the Society's survival would have been under significant threat. The Society was in this predicament when Papandrea became a member of the committee and was subsequently elected President in 2004. Resolution of the emerging financial crisis became the utmost priority for the committee at this time and within a couple of years the Society was able to return to financial health and has remained viable ever since notwithstanding the loss of financial support from the Italian Government several years ago. Papandrea is of the opinion that "the Dante today is undoubtedly the most successful Italian community association in Canberra". This outcome is largely due to his leadership and prudent management of the Society's financial affairs.

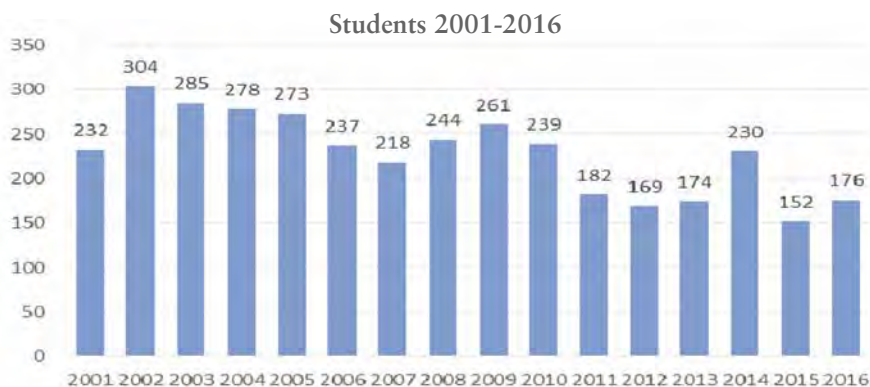
Some key figures

If at the beginning of the '90s, as Ottavio Bagozzi recalls, there were only few fully paid-up members, the subsequent years experienced a pleasing growth in membership, with numbers reaching 375 in 2001 and peaking at 421 in 2002. Although oscillating somewhat, numbers remained relatively stable until 2011, but have declined slightly in later years. In 2016 there were 315 members.





The number of enrolments in language courses has experienced a steadily declining trend in recent years. This has been a common experience of all the Dante Alighieri Societies in Australia. In the past 15 years numbers have declined from 232 in 2001 to 176 in 2016, after going through a peak of 304 in 2002.



As far as the number of language students enrolled, over the years there has been a fall, a typical situation sadly reflected in all national Dante Alighieri Societies. In the last 15 years we have passed from 232 in 2001 to 176 in 2016, with a maximum number of 304 in 2002.

As for conversation groups – a totally free service up to a few years ago when a modest fee was introduced – the number of participants during the academic year varies between 40 and 50.

Biennial National Conferences of the Dante Alighieri Societies

As has already been mentioned, the DAS of Canberra was the first to promote these conferences, and so it immediately took on a leadership role.

Canberra, 1999 – Attended by representatives from Queensland, NSW, Melbourne and Perth. On that occasion, the Chairman of the DAS of Canberra, Lo Bianco, reminded participants that Italians, from a minority who were sometimes despised, had become, and were considered to be, bearers of language and culture. One of the important aims of the conference was to strengthen ties between the different committees.

Brisbane, 2002 – The meeting was synchronised with celebrations for the 50th anniversary of the Brisbane Society. Representatives from various Australian Societies outlined their activities, plans, proposals and issues, and underlined the benefits of collaboration with other associations having similar aims. They also shared ideas on how to attract young members. The round-table session addressed the theme of the Italian language in Australia. A representative from the DAS Rome headquarters was present at the conference, prof. Luisa Carrà. At Brisbane there were also representatives from Cairns, Canberra (President Prof. Joe Lo Bianco), Gold Coast, Hobart, Melbourne, Perth, Sydney, Townsville and Wollongong.

Melbourne 2004 - A representative from the Rome headquarters, Eugenio Vender, opened the conference, which was focussed on the “Promotion of Italian Language and Culture”. The representatives of the committees of Brisbane, Canberra, Gold Coast, Hobart, Melbourne, Sydney, Townsville and Wollongong described their respective activities and debated problems and possible solutions.

Sydney, 2006 – The importance of Italian heritage; the commitment to assist the elderly and to safeguard the Italian language among children and adults, as well as the use of Italian in trade exchange, were all stressed. It was hoped that the Italian Government would support such initiatives more generously. Representatives from Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, the Gold Coast, Wollongong, and Canberra also took part in this conference. Canberra was represented by the two Vice-Presidents – Yvette Devlin and Danila Marinolli.

Perth, 2008 – The theme of the conference was “Poetry will shine light on the right path”, its aim being to recognise the value of poetry in the teaching of Italian. (It is worth noting, in this regard, that the *Dante Review* of Canberra always devotes a page to poetry). On that occasion, the Canberra delegation, led by VP Yvette Devlin, was applauded for the high standard of teaching and the support offered to teachers through its Teachers’ Workshop and its Teachers’ Package, as well as the benefits arising from analysis of the student evaluations conducted at the end of each course.

Adelaide, 2010 – The Conference’s theme was “The world in Italian”. During a round table discussion on the theme of “Italian as a world language in contemporary times”, Prof. Lo Bianco presented worrying statistics on the drop in the number of student of Italian in the last years of school and he encouraged those present to work hard to promote Italian as a language of high culture to be part of compulsory school programs. The representative from Canberra was again Yvette Devlin. The other representatives came from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and the Gold Coast.

Canberra, 2012 – The conference was opened by Alessandro Giovine, First Secretary at the Embassy of Italy, who reassured those present that economic disengagement on the part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, owing to a cut of 75% in the funds provided by the Italian government, did not point to a lack of interest on the government's part; on the contrary, “there is total support for Dante Alighieri Societies in the promotion of Italian culture and language”. The topics of greatest interest were the involvement of young people and the need to appoint a national representative as spokesperson for shared needs of all the Societies when dealing with institutions and with Italian and Australian authorities. It noted the decline of students of Italian in public schools. Delegates from the Committees of Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Brisbane and Perth attended the conference.

Melbourne, 2014 – When examining the principal theme of the conference, “Quo vadis? The future of the Italian language in Australia”, delegates pointed to an important problem to resolve: there was a gap between the drop in student numbers in Italian classes in contrast to the increase in interest Australians felt towards Italian culture. It was decided to follow COD (Capacity Opportunity Desire), as a model to promote Italian. President Franco Papandrea represented Canberra; there were also representatives from Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Brisbane, Gold Coast, Cairns and Mildura. Consistent with the theme of the conference, several experts on language policy enriched the debate with papers exploring various aspects of strategies aimed at promoting Italian in Australia.

Gold Coast, 2016 - President Franco Papandrea was again the representative for Canberra. The various reports presented described the activities carried out by each Society on how they celebrated the 750th anniversary of the birth of Dante Alighieri. It was interesting to witness the Skype link with a group of young people in Melbourne. Different experiences in teaching Italian were compared and many underlined the importance of knowing a foreign language in order to succeed academically. Before the close of the session delegates discussed their shared strategies to promote Italian culture and language. Besides the host committees of Brisbane and the Gold Coast, representatives from the committees of Melbourne, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, Canberra, Cairns and Mildura also took part.



Dante delegates at the national DAS Conference held in Canberra in 2012. Seated at far right is Alessandro Giovine, and behind him Concetta Perna. The DAS Committee delegates are Sue Hancock, Franco Papandrea and Yvette Devlin (seated in the centre)

The Committee

We would have liked to bring you the names of all committee members over the years, people who worked with enthusiasm albeit with varied levels of commitment. Unfortunately such a task is impossible, as full lists of committee members are not available.

We shall therefore limit ourselves to listing the names of presidents and of their close collaborators over the years, even if their names have already been mentioned in other parts of our outline, and we shall give the year they were nominated to their positions. Unfortunately, archival files are also not complete, which leaves us to report on what could be ascertained from the archives, from the *Dante Review*, from the headquarters in Rome, and from interviews we conducted with important members involved in the history of the Dante Society. We apologise for any errors or omissions that may remain.

1957	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i>	Prof. Dale Trendall Prof. Sir Keith Hancock and Lady Iona Carrington Arch. Enrico Taglietti
1962	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i>	Prof. Koch-Emmery Prof. Dale Trendall
1963	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Secretary</i>	Prof. K. Masterman Prof. Sir Keith Hancock Arch. Enrico Taglietti
1966	<i>President</i>	Prof. R.C. Wasteman
1968	<i>President</i>	Arch. Enrico Taglietti
1969	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i>	Dott. F. Rinaldi (later nominated life member) Prof. R. Johnson
1970-76	<i>President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Dott. F. Rinaldi Myriam Bonazzi Manlio Pancino
1977	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. John Molony M. Kelly Mrs. Muinz Manlio Pancino
1978-81	<i>President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. John Molony Myriam Bonazzi Manlio Pancino
1982-83	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. John Molony Cosimo Sciammamanica and Myriam Bonazzi E. Flynn C. Faraday

1984-88	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. John Molony Myriam Bonazzi Manlio Pancino
1989	<i>President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. John Molony Eden Zanatta Manlio Pancino
1990	<i>President</i>	Prof. John Molony
1991-93	<i>President</i>	Manlio Pancino
1994-97	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. John Molony Manlio Pancino Magda Damo and then Ottavio Bagozzi Eden Zanatta
1998	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco Magda Damo Ottavio Bagozzi Eden Zanatta
1999	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco Magda Damo Hugo Toro Eden Zanatta
2000	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco Magda Damo and Hadyn Strang Hugo Toro Danila Marinolli
2001	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco Magda Damo and Hadyn Strang Hugo Toro Margaret Matthews
2002	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco Magda Damo and Prof. Franco Papandrea Hugo Toro Margaret Matthews
2003	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Joseph Lo Bianco Prof. Franco Papandrea for the whole year; Magda Damo, Antonio Mancina and Giuseppe Parisi, each for part of the year Hugo Toro Margaret Matthews

2004	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Danila Marinolli Hugo Toro Margaret Matthews
2005	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Danila Marinolli Hugo Toro Margaret Matthews
2006	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Danila Marinolli Francesco Sofo Margaret Matthews
2007	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-President</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Danila Marinolli Claudio Campaniello Margaret Matthews
2008	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Danila Marinolli Sam Palma Orlando Di Iulio
2009	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Danila Marinolli Carmen Zanetti Orlando Di Iulio
2010	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Danila Marinolli Orlando di Iulio
2011	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Sue Hancock Andrew Antenucci and then Paul Merner Mario Rosi
2012	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Sue Hancock Mario Rosi
2013	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Sue Hancock Davide Lucchetti Mario Rosi

2014	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Tamsin Hong Davide Lucchetti Mario Rosi
2015	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Tamsin Hong Mario Rosi
2016	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Prof. Franco Papandrea Yvette Devlin and Tamsin Hong Cristina Hurley Tony Hanrahan
2017	<i>President</i> <i>Vice-Presidents</i> <i>Secretary</i> <i>Treasurer</i>	Franco Papandrea Cristina Giusti and Gordon McCormick Grant Doran Tony Hanrahan



Franco Papandrea receives a grant from
Multicultural Affairs Minister Kate Lundy in 2013

The location of activities of the DAS

The venue for the various activities of the DAS has followed a difficult path over the decades, owing to organisational and economic difficulties, and to a lack of available space. Unfortunately, the range of activities could not always find a space in the same location, and this in turn made its management problematic. To give an idea of the difficulties faced by the Society, we shall give a summary of where different activities were sited.

Formal courses. In the '90s, the first class was held at the ANU, with a classroom at no cost. In the following years other sites followed on a rental-fee basis, such as at Telopea Park School; Lyons Primary School (at that time this was the ACT Italian bilingual school); the Italo-Australian Club in Forrest and Yarralumla Primary School (which took on the role of bilingual school after the closure of Lyons PS). In recent times small classes have taken place in the library of the Dante Society at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre.

Conversation groups. In private homes, ad hoc, in the '80s; at the Italo-Australian Club from the '90s; at the Italian Cultural Centre in 2006 and finally at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre beginning from 2007.

Cultural activities. Initially at the Embassy of Italy, then at the Italo-Australian Club, at the Italian Cultural Centre in 2006 and finally, from 2007, at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre. It should be noted that many cultural evenings (for example, concerts and games of briscola) were held in the home of Mario and Magda Damo.

The Offices of the Dante. Initially at the Italo-Australian Club, then at the Italian Cultural Centre in 2006 and at the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre from 2007 to the present.



Dante teachers at a workshop held in February 2010, with courses coordinator Yvette Devlin (centre)

If it's true that those who sing speak Italian better, then long live the choir!

The Dante Musica Viva Choir (DMV) was established in March of 2005 by Prof. Francesco Sofo, a member of the Dante Society and a fine musician, with the aim of promoting Italian language and culture through music. Around a dozen students from the conversation groups took part. Numbers have grown over the years, and the choir currently has some 40 to 50 members, including musicians and singers.

At first, in order to appeal to a greater number of Italo-Australians, classical Italian and Neapolitan songs defined the repertoire; then, gradually, it was enriched with new pieces including songs in regional dialects and famous Verdi choruses and arias, such as *Va pensiero*, *Il coro degli zingari* and *Libiam*.

Such is the enthusiasm of all members that they regularly participate in the Thursday evening rehearsals in the Function Room of the Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre. The choir offers all those who love Italian music the opportunity to sing – there are no auditions.

Right from the beginning the choir has performed admirably at all sorts of important events, such as the National Multicultural Festival, the celebrations of Italy's National Day and at regional Italian Association events. The choir has entertained residents of Canberra's Villaggio Sant'Antonio, residents at retirement villages in the Illawarra, and it has even given a concert in Griffith for the local Italian community.

Concerts at the Italo-Australian Club of Canberra - in 2012, 2014 and 2015 - represent significant moments for the choir, as does the celebration of the end of the academic year, when DMV presents new musical pieces from its vast repertoire.

In recognition of the choir's artistic maturity, their first CD (*Nostalgia d'Italia*) was cut in 2010, followed by a second (*Nostalgia d'Italia 2*) in 2015.



The Dante choir performs for members at the end of the 2012 academic year

A huge achievement for the choir was winning the Multicultural Section of the Australian National Eisteddfod for choirs in 2013.

Among all the valued members of the choir, other than the already mentioned Conductor and Music Director, Maestro Francesco Sofo, we mention in particular the Manager and occasional Conductor Sam Palma; Louise Ibbotson on the mandolin; the ‘three tenors’ Giovanni Andriolo, Livio Chicco and Sam Salma; the lovely voices of sopranos Virginia Banyard and Denise Stephenson; Yvette Devlin, organiser and presenter; and David Wilson, refined lover of song, member of the choir, and sound engineer during the group performances.

But these are only some of the members of the choir, whose passionate musical dedication makes possible, and contributes to, the life of the choir. The personal stories of many of the members can be found in their profiles published in the *Dante Review* over the last two years.

***Dante Review* and other forms of communication**

In 1973 the driving force of the Dante Society, Lio Pancino, began the publication of a monthly newsletter, the *Dante Review*, with interesting cultural articles and information on the activities of the Dante Society. He remained responsible until 1981 when for about 15 months Julie Docker, a senior tutor at the ANU, took responsibility. It is not known if and when the *Dante Review* was published during the remaining years of the 1980s, since copies cannot be found.

At the beginning of the '90s, there was a publication edited by CIAC (an organization involved in the teaching of Italian in the schools, managed by Myriam Bonazzi and Cosimo Sciannimanica), with a page dedicated to the activities of the DAS. Following this, the Committee of the DAS realised that they had the capacity to produce a newsletter and in 1995 took up again the monthly publication of the *Dante Review*, with Sante and Loredana Modesti as editors.

And here are the most significant stages in the evolution of the various media to enable communication between the Society and its members as well as the community in general:

- Thanks to the voluntary work of Dante supporter Mark Kerr, in 2006 the first website of the DAS was created; this later became <http://danteact.org.au/>
- In 2009, the *Dante Review* was placed in electronic form on the Society's website, but also continued to be available in hard-copy form.
- In 2012 the publication became bimonthly.
- In 2013, the site was reviewed and improved, with many links to useful sites to reinforce Italian language study, and a Facebook page was added.

In the last few years the Society has been receiving an annual grant of up to \$1500 from the ACT government to support the publication of the newsletter.

Dante Review

“To preserve and disseminate Italian language and culture”

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Regular Events

**DMV rehearsals
on Thursdays 5-7pm**

**Conversation groups
on Thursdays 7-9pm
recommencing 1 June**

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**Italy's national day
is celebrated on 2 June**

**the date in 1946 when
the Italian people voted
for a Republican form of government**



**And here is the first of the twelve Fundamental
Principles of the Italian Constitution:**

Art. 1

**L'Italia è una Repubblica democratica,
fondata sul lavoro.**

**La sovranità appartiene al popolo,
che la esercita nelle forme e nei limiti
della Costituzione**

**You can read all 12 Fundamental Principles
and their English translation
in this edition of the Review (p. 5-7)**

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The praiseworthy energy and commitment of the many editors of the *Dante Review*, all women since 1999, are evidenced by the number and variety of activities organised and publicised, and by the always relevant cultural and social topics covered, offering an interesting compendium of ‘ongoing education’ to its readers of all levels.

It is time to thank all the kind women who from 1999 to the present time have brought prestige to our newsletter:

- From 1999 to 2004 (45 issues) Marie Ciano, who was the first secretary in the office of the Society and whose commitment often went beyond the line of duty. Even at this early stage there were pages dedicated to writers, artists, composers, film directors, historical figures, works of art and Italian icons such as the Vespa, and to an assortment of regions.
- From 2005 to 2007 the editor was Danila Marinolli, who was also Vice-President.
- From 2008 to 2012 the editor was Yvette Devlin assisted by Cellina Benassi.
- From 2013 to today Yvette Devlin has continued the work of editor, with technical assistance from the staff in the office of the Society.

The newsletter is characterized by some regular features, such as: the Language corner, Sayings, the Poetry corner, and the Historical note. News from the Office and future events planned are also reported. A full summary of cultural presentations given during the academic year is included, as well as information on the activities organised and supported by the DAS.

Various pages on current events and folklore appear in each issue, for example, information on Carnival, Easter, Christmas and customs belonging to various Italian regions, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Italy’s National Day, and also cooking pages with special and tasty recipes. Special events and important people are celebrated, such as, for example, Aldo Giurgola (the Italian architect of Parliament House in Canberra, who unfortunately recently passed away), and many of the members of the choir to whom are dedicated biographical pages.



Cultural activities through the years

In the first few decades of the Dante Alighieri Society there was undoubtedly a focus on culture. For example, in its first year we discover that there were talks on Roman frescos, on contemporary poets, the works of Masaccio, contemporary Italian architecture, and an event called 'A trip to Italy', with slides. Again in that first year a reading group was formed which focussed on reading classical poets, as well as contemporary Italian poets and philosophers.

Such intensity could not be sustained, particularly with the departure from the committee of many distinguished academic members. Despite this, over the years, there were talks on important Italian historical figures and events, on Dante too, and on art exhibitions. During the Molony presidency, concerts were organised in the home of the Damo family, with Italian singers and composers who were still students, including soprano Ditta Zizi and baritone John Brunato. The Society also organised a highly successful concert for John Brunato at the School of Music.

From 2005 Vice-President Yvette Devlin has organised a cultural program to include seven to ten cultural events a year, on a wide number of topics related to Italian history, art, music, cinema, literature, science, aspects of its culture and traditions, cuisine, immigration, fashion and customs in general. On the literature side, cultural evenings were organised in 2013 to celebrate the 700th anniversary of the birth of Boccaccio, and in 2015 to celebrate the 750th anniversary of the birth of Dante. Light-hearted events were organised as well, such as Carnival parties, end-of-year cooking competitions and educational 'Trivia nights' on Italy.

On the initiative of Luigi Catizone, in 2015 and 2016 three video conferences took place in a Skype linkup with presenters in Italy, the first with journalist and writer Pino Aprile, who spoke on relations between Northern and Southern Italy.



Dante members getting into the spirit of carnevale

Other Significant Activities of the Dante Alighieri Society

Other than the cultural activities summarised above, which covered an extensive range of interesting topics, the DAS over the years has promoted and participated in a wide variety of cultural events and initiatives.

For example, in 1981 Julie Docker took the initiative and created a competition for students of Italian in schools, who were invited to paint an Italian scene. The prize-giving took place in the Italian Embassy, in the main hall full of families who had never set foot in the Embassy, giving rise to great satisfaction on behalf of both Ambassador and the Dante Society.

Other important initiatives had to be abandoned, either through lack of interest, or because they suffered from not having the right framework, amongst which was the attempt to involve young people, called *la Gioventù dantesca*. It was promoted in 1999, but it never got off the ground. Other similar attempts were made with the same outcome, leaving us still with the challenge to solve ‘the youth problem’.

Two attempts were made to create a theatrical group – the first in 2000 did not find takers, while in 2006, through the work of Massimo De Lisio from the Italian Embassy, the *Compagnia Teatro all’Italiana* was born, which succeeded in putting on two one-act comedies in November of that year. The following year, the same theatrical group, including members of the Dante Society, staged the play *I casi sono due*.



DMV musicians at the first Italian Festa in the Embassy Gardens - 2015

Other than supporting the above theatrical initiatives, the Society joined the group “Appassionati del Cinema italiano” which, under the umbrella of ComItEs and with the support of other organisations, put on Italian films in 2006 and 2007. Still on the topic of cinema, in 2013 the Dante Society took a leadership role in organising film evenings – “Cine Pizza”- in collaboration with the Italo-Australian Club and the Accademia Italiana della Cucina. As far back as 1981 the Society had organized a “Festival del Cinema Italiano” in collaboration with the Italo-Australian Club and the Embassy.

Only two cooking courses have been able to be conducted, in 2000 and in 2003, when Italian cooks were able to work in a suitable kitchen.

Despite the initial commitment to provide future examiners for the Dante Society Headquarters’ project PLIDA (called Progetto Lingua Italiana Dante Alighieri, which offers people the possibility to take exams recognised by Italian authorities) we could not get the initiative off the ground due to a lack of interest.

On the other hand, there have been other successful initiatives where the Dante Society collaborated in a positive proactive way. For example, in the years 2005-8, four Italo-Australian Fun Runs were organised by the Italian Embassy. In 2015-16 the Dante Society collaborated again with the Embassy and other Associations to organise the first two editions of the Festa Italiana in the Embassy Gardens.



Dante Treasurer Mario Rosi plays the piano accordio in front of the Dante information stall at the National Multicultural Festival in 2016



Over the years the DAS has participated constantly in various events among which the annual exhibition of the best of Italian motoring, Auto Italia; the annual National Multicultural Festival; the Settimana della Lingua italiana nel Mondo (a week devoted to the promotion of the Italian language); and the Settimana della Cucina italiana nel Mondo (a week devoted to Italian cuisine). Such initiatives have inspired many of our members to attend or become involved, always in the context of promoting Italian language and culture.

DAS's commitment to solidarity deserves highlighting too. Over the years it has worked to collect funds to help the populations hit by earthquakes – Friuli in 1976, Irpinia in 1980, l'Aquila in 2009, Emilia-Romagna in 2012, and also the last earthquake in Central Italy in 2016. Such disasters have mobilised the entire Italian community of Canberra and Queanbeyan. In the case of the last three earthquakes, the Dante Society organised large multicultural concerts at which the Dante Musica Viva choir performed along with other groups. All funds raised were devolved to the national appeals in favour of those affected by the earthquakes.

Finally, we need to mention the Dante prizes awarded, since 1976, to the best students of Italian at the Australian National University. This initiative is consistent with the Society's aim to interact with the Canberra community with a view to promoting Italian language and culture.

Life Members

At the present time the DAS has four life members:

Wal Costanzo (1998) – for his contribution in setting up the rules and regulations of the Society

Magda Damo (1999) – for her very fine contribution to the Society, in particular in the promotion and appreciation of language, art and culture in general

Sante Modesti and Hugo Toro (2002) – for their enormous contribution to the revival of the Dante post 1998. Hugo Toro died in 2017.

Ottavio Bagozzi (2009) – for having revitalized and enlarged the Society in the second half of the '90s, for having obtained funds from the Italian Government enabling the setting up of the office, and having organised the first national conference of the Dante Alighieri Societies.

Among the life members there was also **Manlio Pancino**, deceased a few years ago.

