



Federation of Netherlands Societies Ltd.



**SHORT HISTORY
of and
INFORMATION
on
NETHERLANDS SOCIETIES
in
NEW SOUTH WALES
and the
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

The following groups concentrate mainly on song and dance: the Folkloristic groups, the choirs and the Carnival societies. The oldest is:

THE DUTCH FOLKDANCE GROUP

De Nederlandse Volksdansgroep

They do exactly as their name suggests: to keep alive the art of Dutch folk dancing. A number of the traditional Dutch costumes are imported from Holland, but quite a few are reproduced in Australia from imported material. Theatre costumes are never used. The outfits mostly used for performances are those from Volendam and some from Marken. This group has become very successful, to such an extent, that in 1976 a junior club was founded for youngsters between 6 and 12 years. Although only a few of these children are of distant Dutch descent, they seem to look to the Dutch for some identification.

With rehearsals twice a week, and with a performance nearly every week, it is a busy group indeed.

To join, please contact the Secretary. She will give you the necessary information regarding rehearsals or where the group can be seen performing. She can also inform you at what price the costumes can be hired. Of importance is the fact that these costumes have even travelled as far as Tokyo.

The birth of the Folk Dancing Group was exactly 10.00 p.m. on January 29, 1951, when it was announced on A.B.C. Radio that the first prize for a float in Sydney Harbour, on the occasion of the Commonwealth Jubilee Celebrations, was awarded to a Dutch entry. Ever since the group has become more and more popular, much through the efforts of the late Dr. Wouters, who promoted the Dutch culture wherever and whenever possible. The dancers have participated in many fundraising events and performed all over N.S.W. They

have adorned T.V. shows with Bobby Limb's Sound of Music and more recently they have appeared on Channel 0/28. The group played in four films, including a feature film shot during the Tulip Festival in Bowral. There have been, and still are, too many activities to name them all. They do not only perform for outsiders, but organise many kinds of entertainment for the members themselves.

In the course of this last story, the name of Dr. Wouters cropped up. He was not only the driving force behind the "Volkdans Groep", but he moved through many aspects of our culture, whether Dutch, Polish, Italian, Croatian, Greek or Russian. He officially knew at least 10 languages and this made it possible for him to make a great contribution to the welfare of many immigrants of different nationalities.

Dr. Cornelis Wouters, who died in Brunssum, Limburg, Holland at the age of 81 years, received many distinctions. Some of these are: in 1961 the Gertrud Kumm Award for Citizenship from Governor General Lord Dunrossil; the Knighthood of the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity; Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands personally handed him the "Zilveren Anjer" (Silver Carnation); and he was also distinguished by the Polish government. He also became a Knight of the Order of Oranje Nassau (Ridder in de Orde van Oranje Nassau).

On the occasion of his death in 1978 the following passage was written in the Dutch Australian Weekly:

"His influence on the Dutch Culture in the Australian community will undoubtedly bear fruit for a long time to come."