

Veneto Club 50th Anniversary

VENETO CLUB ADELAIDE: 50 YEARS OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND CELEBRATION

The Veneto Club (the Club) at Toogood Avenue, Beverley, was officially registered in South Australia in September 1972 as an incorporated entity, which was one year from the day of inception, September 1971, and officially opened on 25th May 1974.

The origins of the Veneto Club began in 1970, instigated by a group of visionary young *Veneti* who frequented the Fogolar Furlan Club in the 1960s. These visionaries brought together many friends and families to form this great club. The focus was on preserving its origins and celebrating the language and traditions unique to the Veneto region of northern Italy. The Veneto Club has played a vital role in keeping the Veneto culture alive and has made invaluable contributions to the Italian community in Adelaide. The Club at Beverley was well known for its presence in the community, great hospitality, social gatherings, cultural events, sports, etc., and providing a home for generations of *Veneti* living in South Australia.

The construction of the Veneto Club began in 1972, and over the course of 84 weeks (mostly weekends), dedicated members volunteered their time and donated resources, enabling the Club to be inaugurated and opened on 25th May 1974 with grand celebrations.

The first General Meeting was held in October 1972. The meeting place was the Oberdan Hall in Findon, at which 298 out of 300 members were present. The first Veneto Club Management Committee was elected, with Arturo Pagliaro as president, Francesco Battistello and Gino Torressan as vice presidents, Frank Farina as secretary, and Mario Borghetto, Leo Conci, Ampelio Bendo, Gino Innocente, Carlo Boin and Giorgio Busato as councillors. The names of subsequent committees are listed in the club's publication 'History of the Veneto Club Inc., Adelaide 1974-2024".

In 1973 the Veneto Club held a Christmas picnic at Uraidla. It was an event without precedent and one which will always be remembered by its members. The picnic site looked enormous; by evening it was estimated that 6000 people had attended. The food consumed was amazing: 10,000 panini, a tonne of meat and salads, and 26 barrels of beer, not to mention the amount of wine, soft drinks and gelato consumed. But the highlight of the day was seeing Father Christmas arrive in a helicopter; it took everybody by surprise, especially the hundreds of children who were bombarded with presents. A highlight of what was to come over the next 25 years with events held at the Veneto Club.



The Veneto Club has a strong culture of volunteers who gave their time to organise a wide range of events, especially when we were at Toogood Avenue, with special recognition to the Management, Social Ladies, Youth, Bocce, Billiards/8 Ball, Netball and Soccer Committees. Every volunteer played an integral part in shaping the club into what it is today.

The celebration of the first 25 years in 1999 was highlighted by the sense of joy and achievements shared by members, families and friends of the club, with celebrations continuing for a week. The Club's publication "Veneto Club Inc., 25th Anniversary 1974-1999", with details of the history and achievements in its first 25 years, was produced.

The next 25 years of the Club, from 1999 to 2024, brought with it several highlights and challenges. One of the highlights of 2007 was an event during the World Police and Fire Games held in Adelaide in March. The Veneto Club hosted a social event for eighty-six Italian athletes which was attended by the Italian Consulate and representatives of seventeen Adelaide Italian clubs and associations and three hundred guests.

The ongoing challenges, both in the decline of membership, building maintenance and legislative requirements, were put to the club members at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in August 2013. Important decisions were discussed about the future, and a very emotional decision was made to sell the club. The Veneto Club property was sold in November 2013, and the search for a new home commenced. As the Management

Committee investigated a new home for the Club, events were held for members and their families at the Festival Function Centre, in Findon.

In 2015 a new home for now came from discussions with the owners of the Woodville West Torrens Football Club Inc. The Eagles Function Centre at Oval Avenue, Woodville South, has provided the opportunity for the Veneto Club to negotiate an agreement to occupy an area of the building for use as an office and space for memorabilia. As well as use of the casual dining and bar facilities for playing cards, 8-ball competitions and a casual meeting space for its members. Members started coming back, and events started to grow again. From our traditional ones being the Anniversary Ball, Radicchio Festa and New Year's Ball. With our most popular now being monthly luncheons and sausage and panino nights, plus another 6 functions throughout the year.

The Veneto Club has been able to purchase two investment properties since the sale of the grounds at Beverley and is now able to give back to its members in a positive way. Holding many events at a discounted rate for all its members.

The celebration of the “50 Year Anniversary of the Veneto Club” was held on the 25th of May 2024 at the Entertainment Centre, Hindmarsh. The Anniversary Ball was by invitation only and attended by 600 people, comprising members, families and friends of the club, along with government members and presidents from other Italian clubs and associations of Adelaide. The event was one to remember, with musicians, acrobats, jugglers, magicians and more performing throughout the night. The anniversary cake was cut by the three members of the first Management Committee, Giorgio Busato, Gino Innocente and Rinaldo Stecca, and was a highlight of this wonderful celebration.



Membership of the Veneto Club has grown over the past couple of years, and as of September 2025, our financial membership stands at 445 members. The Club has seen an increase in second- and third-generation families becoming members and enjoying the events put on by the Management and Next Generation Committees of the Club.

In 2017/2018 the Management Committee started researching the possibility of setting up a “Veneto Charity” to protect its investment properties should membership of the Club decrease dramatically over the coming years.

A Special General Meeting was held on 31st August 2025, resulting in significant changes to the Veneto Club Inc. Constitution, 2015, now referred to as Veneto Club Inc., Association Rules, 2025, and a key role was established to implement a Veneto Club charity should membership fall below 150.

With the current strong membership, the Management Committee, together with the Next Generation Committee, will continue to support all of its members, being Foundation members, wives of Foundation members, and ordinary and new members, and continue to look at ways the Club can continue moving forward as a united Veneto Club and provide a place the Veneti can call home.

In closing, the following photo of the Veneto Club at Beverley honours the foundation members' commitment and vision it established in 84 weeks and what was in 1974 one of the largest and well-recognised Italian clubs in Adelaide.



References used for this report include the following Veneto Club Incorporated publications:

“In 84 Domeniche Nasce il Veneto Club Dal 1971 al 1974”

(Recollections, notes and reflections of events from 1971 to 1974)

- “Veneto Club Incorporated – First 25 Years of Its History”

“History of the Veneto Club Incorporated, Adelaide 1974-2024”

Piero Fioretti
President
November 2025

