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Ambasáid na hÉireann Canberra
Embassy of Ireland Canberra



Slán go fóill

A chairde Gael is a chairde uilig. Is oth liom a chur in iúl go bhfuil mo thréimhse mar Ambasadóir na hÉireann tagtha chun deiridh. Bhain mé féin is Carmel, an-taitneamh as aithne a chur oraibh is taitneamh a bhaint as obair libh thar an cúig bliana atá caite againn anseo san Astráil.

Dear friends, I am sorry to say that my term as Ambassador of Ireland to Australia has come to an end. Carmel and I have really enjoyed getting to know and working with you over the five years we have spent in Australia. We return to Ireland in early August.

I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to all of you. The last five years have been amongst the most rewarding and fruitful in my public service career – a career which began many years ago! Of course, as in most endeavours in life, I could not have achieved whatever I have achieved here without the support, guidance and good humour of my colleagues here at the Embassy, in the Consulate General Sydney and our Honorary Consulate in Perth. So many other groups, associations and individuals across this magnificent country have been central to the Embassy's mission of promoting the full range of Ireland's interests in Australia including Enterprise Ireland, IDA Ireland and Tourism Ireland.

I have always been proud to work with Irish communities wherever located in the world but the sheer extent, commitment and love for Ireland that is so evident amongst the Irish community in Australia is truly awesome. Almost everywhere I travelled in this vast country I met an Irish woman or man, or discovered some current or historic link to Ireland and things Irish – from the splendour of the Federal Parliament to the most modest and humble rural dwelling. We Irish have made and continue to make such a magnificent contribution to Australia.

As I reflect on the Irish impact on Australia, I never cease to be amazed by the diversity of Irish social and cultural activity. We boast hundreds of Irish dancing schools, scores of GAA clubs, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí groups, many Irish language and Irish studies groups, drama and literary groups.

When considering the welfare of our community, I particularly appreciate the work of the emigrant advice and support centres in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney which have continued to support and offer invaluable assistance to the more vulnerable members of our community particularly during these Covid-19 Pandemic times. Other support networks like the Ireland Fund Australia, the Lansdowne Club and the Irish Australian Chamber of Commerce are further evidence of the commitment of our diaspora in Australia to Ireland's continued future development.

There is so much more I would love to say about how much Carmel and I have enjoyed our time in Australia but suffice perhaps to say what a privilege and pleasure it has been for us to live, work and play amongst such a loving, supportive and inclusive community.

A Chairde, míle buíochas ó chroí – guím rath agus séan oraibh féin is bhur gcúram.

Breandán Ó Caollaí and Carmel Callan

Ambasadóir na hÉireann/Ambassador of Ireland

Farewell lunch with the Governor General

The Ambassador and Carmel were deeply honoured to be hosted by the Governor General David Hurley and Mrs Linda Hurley to a farewell lunch at Government House.

The lunch was an opportunity to thank the Governor General and Mrs Hurley for all their support for the Embassy's mission in Australia and their help in strengthening even more the already strong ties between both countries. The lunch was also a fitting occasion to recognise and celebrate the centuries' long contribution of the Irish community to the development of this great land and the Irish influence in the political, social and cultural history of Australia.

Governor General Hurley has proud Irish heritage himself.

Of course, there was only one way such a pleasant gathering could end and that was with lively renditions of many favourite tunes including 'When Irish Eyes Are Smiling' under the very expert and melodious guidance of Mrs Hurley!

Slán is beannacht a Ard-Ghobharnóir.



Presentation of Virtual Credentials to the President of the Republic of Nauru

Ambassador Ó Caollaí accompanied by his spouse, Carmel Callan, presented credentials virtually to the President of the Republic of Nauru, Mr Lionel Aingimea. The Ambassador in his speech responding to the President highlighted the similarities between both countries, both islands, both suffering from the effects of climate change and how Ireland looked forward to working with Nauru on issues of concern during Ireland's tenure on the Security Council and where appropriate in the European Union.



Celebrating 75 years of Ireland-Australia Diplomatic Relations

The Embassy organised a weekend of activities to celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Australia. The main event was a conference, preceded by a reception with traditional music and singing.

The event was opened with an indigenous welcome to country, a message from Minister Coveney followed by an address by First Assistant Secretary John Geering from DFAT. The main content were lectures on the earliest period of our diplomatic history by four excellent and well informed academics. The Ambassador concluded the event with an address regarding the current state of relations between both countries.

Adding greatly to the occasion was the presence of outstanding traditional musicians who played at each interval and a particularly poignant sean-nós song about an unjust transportation 'Na Connerys'. There was also an exhibition of a replica of the *Book of Kells* presented to Australia in 1952 on behalf of then Taoiseach Éamon de Valera, our historic Visitors Book and a display relating to the first Ambassador, Dr T J Kiernan and his wife, the renowned singer, Delia Murphy.



BLOOMSDAY AROUND AUSTRALIA

Why celebrate Ulysses? An Australian perspective.

The Ambassador and Carmel hosted a virtual presentation: *Why Celebrate Ulysses? An Australian perspective* by Dr Frances Devlin-Glass OAM, Honorary Associate Professor, Deakin University.

Guests from the Friends of the National Library, Dr Russell Smith of ANU, and members of the Irish community enjoyed the reception, the presentation and Q&A afterwards.

Ulysses was among the first three books to be censored by the Commonwealth of Australia in 1929 and it was removed from censorship lists in 1953.

This presentation told the story of what stood in the way for the best part of half a century of its being read and taught. Censorship was not the only impediment. *Ulysses* is a novel that slowly reveals its scepticism about a range of institutions, including literature itself. Its radicalism in style and subject was yet another impediment.

Dr Devlin-Glass's presentation also looked at the *Bloomsday in Melbourne* experience of turning Joyce into theatre and what it has revealed about the comedy of Joyce, his ability to see the wisdom and wonder in the everyday, and also the radical nature of the philosophical questions he dares to ask.



Celebrating Bloomsday with the Irish Club of Canberra

The Embassy was delighted to fund and participate in a Bloomsday celebration organised by the Irish Club of Canberra.

The well attended event included readings from *Ulysses*, enactments and singing songs of the era. Many participants dressed in costume to really get in the spirit of the evening.

A greatly appreciated initiative of the Department of Foreign Affairs was to 'give *Ulysses* a go'.

A total of 50 books were given out on the night of *Ulysses*, *Dubliners* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. It is hoped this will encourage people to dip a toe in and become even more involved next year.



The Darling Downs Irish Club Bloomsday festivities

The Darling Downs Irish Club celebrates *Ulysses* each year on Bloomsday. The celebration is enjoyed by all ages with enthusiasts turning out in period costume.

Of course readings are a part of the day with readers the centre of attention as they recite select passages at the James Joyce Seat in Railway Street, Toowoomba.

This year a new element was added – a writing competition. The idea came from Sr Ursula's college student, Emily Murray, who told a club member how much she enjoyed the book. The club put out a call to secondary schools in the region and several writers' groups asking for reflections of their introduction to *Ulysses*.

Emily won the school's section of the inaugural James Joyce Writing Competition and Aileen Cater-Steel took out the adult prize.



Bloomsday in Brisbane 2021

Once again on 16 June, the Irish Australian Support Association of Qld, in conjunction with the Queensland Irish Association, produced and staged 'Bloomsday in Brisbane' on the main stage in the Queens Street Mall, right in the very heart of the Brisbane CBD.

The event had some pomp provided by the famous QIA Pipe band, some quieter musical moments courtesy of Dominic Ward, and of course the words of Joyce himself as each of the readers declaimed from their chosen episode of *Ulysses*.

The event was live streamed on social media and over two thousand people enjoyed the show from all over Australia, back home in Ireland and many other places worldwide. The support of the event financially by the Embassy of Ireland, was essential as always, and deeply appreciated. We first put this show together a few short years ago, and it has survived the pandemic and grown.

We look forward to doing it again next year, with some adaptations to spice up the show. The event is a great example of the wealth we hold in our culture and the joy we can find in sharing that gift with others.

H.E. Breandán Ó Caollaí has been a stalwart supporter of all things Irish, be it community, culture, or letters, here in the great state of Queensland. As he and Carmel are moving back to Ireland shortly, at the end of his posting as Ambassador of Ireland in Australia, we would all like to say, slán leat agus go raibh míle maith agat Breandán.





"Bridging the Tyranny of Distance, from Brisbane!"
Paddy Farrelly, Coordinator, Irish Australian Support Association Queensland

It no doubt seems a rather large undertaking - the effort required to help the members of our community feel close to hearth, home and culture in the midst of a worldwide crisis, that severed every familiar flying route from Australia to Ireland seemingly overnight - and it is!

That said, it is one of the finest jobs worth doing in these times of separation, anxiety and fear. Over the last 12 years, that the Irish Australian Support Association of Queensland, has been operational; bridging the distance between who we are as members of a diaspora and proud bearers of our cultural roots, living in a land on the far side of the world, so very far away from the land and the blood that brought us and our idea of who we are into being, has always been a core principle of what we do. However, the last eighteen months have challenged each and every one of us, on so many fronts and in so persistent a fashion that hopelessness, isolation and despair, began to be revealed more frequently in the interactions we had with those members of our community we were trying to assist.

Like storm waves pounding incessantly at a beach, it was one hit after another. Lockdowns, loss of the ability to support yourself if you were a young person for example on a working holiday visa, because you did not qualify for any government support such as Job keeper or other forms of welfare. In some cases, overnight, young people found themselves being vilified as the foreigner, the undesirable, the unwanted who were no longer welcome on a farm, or in a region.

A way had to be found to support them, help them get home as safely and as quickly as possible to their families, who in turn were beside themselves with worry. The amount of information that we compiled, shared with the Embassy and received from the Embassy in turn and distributed to those who needed it, to find a way home, while also liaising with local Government institutions – was simply huge.

The effort put in by our volunteer board of directors, the staff at the Embassy and myself in the coordinators chair, seemed to blur into one great big groundhog day of stress and concern. But everyone pulled together, and we managed it.

Our seniors in the community, amongst the most vulnerable, found themselves cut off from any socialisation or human contact that enriched their lives. Families separated from those at home Ireland, unable to bring home a new grandchild to meet the clan, be there for a siblings wedding or mourn at the graveside of a parent or loved one in the embrace of the village or townland you left years before, as the community took turns in filling in the grave, one by one, as is our long-standing way, part of our tradition of engaging with life and death. All these things which we almost took for granted, that we could be there for, were no longer possible. The toll this had on the mental health of our community was immediate and lasting, and, as time wore on, seemed to increase.

Domestic Violence, addictions, depression, anxiety, anti-social behaviour and all of the other things that reveal a deeper concern, all triggered by the pandemic. We appealed to our community and their generosity was immediate and humbling. Additional monies were made available from the Emigrant Support Program in Dublin via the Embassy in Canberra, and IASAQ was able to provide direct professional counselling to people in crisis. Referrals to local services where appropriate were made and we managed to get people the help they needed, when they needed it.

Emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence was provided, food vouchers and phone credit so young people stranded in youth hostels with no money or work, could eat and maintain contact with family in Ireland. With thanks to the Emigrant Support Programme, iPads were purchased and we set up a 'stay connected' project for the seniors. We have developed strong and lasting relationships with various agencies so we could better assist people have a fighting chance of getting an exemption to leave Australia, if they needed to return to Ireland in an emergency.

We are proud of what we could do, with the support of our community, the Embassy and others, to assist those in need or distress. We are doubly proud though, of the fact that in the midst of all the effort Covid-19 required of us, we were able to maintain and present some wonderful cultural events, moments of true connection and reflection and joy, for all the members of our community who were able to attend. We did a Covid safe 'Bloomsday from Brisbane' on the fly and streamed it on social media.

A 'Brisbane Backyard Fleadh Ceol' was arranged by some local musicians and we assisted, and people loved it, and it even got a twirl on TG4 back home. 'Samhain' was staged at the Tivoli Theatre, and the Irish music, dancing and storytelling, that night banished the grimness for a while, and put a tear in many an eye but a smile, a smile for home, in every heart beating there. A Christmas event was put on for those who would be alone, and it was so well received.

It is truly an honour to have been but a small part of a huge effort, by so many, to tend as best possible to the needs of those who needed some help, a lifeline, or a simple cuppa and a chat and a familiar accent to reassure them that it would be ok in the end, somehow.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir
 Paddy Farrelly, Coordinator, IASAQ

Ireland hosts the Diplomatic Club

On Wednesday 14 July, the Deputy Head of Mission and Second Secretary hosted an event held in conjunction with The Canberra Diplomatic Club. This was a well-attended event hosted by the National Press Club of Australia.

This was an opportunity to meet new colleagues, as it comprises of an informal social network involving diplomats, public servants, and all those interested in diplomacy and politics. The sense of occasion was added to courtesy of the music provided by Comhaltas Ceoltoirí Éireann and the Irish dancers of the McGrath School of Irish Dance.



Northern Territory Outreach

The Deputy Head of Mission, Eamonn Robinson, visited the Northern Territory between 24 and 28 May as part of a Delegation of European Union Member State Trade and Investment Counsellors led by Dr Michael Pulch, Ambassador of the European Union to Australia.

The delegation visited Darwin and Alice Springs. In Darwin the delegation had meetings with, the Honourable Selena Uibo MLA, Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Northern Territory, the Honourable Kon Vatskalis, and Lord Mayor of Darwin. Eamonn hosted a reception for the Irish Community in Darwin on 25 May and was interviewed on ABC radio earlier in the day.



Lunch with Interns from the Australian Institute of International Affairs

The Ambassador and Carmel hosted interns from the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) for a discussion on various aspects of Ireland's foreign policy, relations with Australia, Brexit and other topics. It was a useful forum to interact with future opinion formers in Australia.



The group led by the AIIA National Executive Director, Dr Bryce Wakefield, included post-graduate and doctorate candidates who are focusing on international affairs and before our gathering had a briefing on Ireland and pertinent issues. Their level of engagement was impressive and excellent.

Dr Wakefield referenced public reaction to the Ambassador's recent address to the ACT Chapter of AIIA regarding Ireland and Brexit, the video of which has attracted over 15,000 views on YouTube.



The Presidential Distinguished Service Award

The Presidential Distinguished Service Award (Award) for the Irish Abroad is presented by the President every year. It recognises the service given to this country or to Irish communities abroad by those who live outside Ireland. The hard work, energy and dedication of nominees make a valuable contribution to people's lives and are deserving of our thanks and respect. Nominations for the Award are made through our Embassy network, and are considered by a High Level Panel.

The Panel recommends up to a total of 10 people every year from these nominations. The categories under which individuals can be nominated are: Arts, Culture and Sport, Business and Education, Charitable Works, Irish Community Support, Peace, Reconciliation and Development, Science, Technology and Innovation.

The closing date for receipt of nominations is Friday, 6 August 2021.

Link to the nomination form: [PDSA-2021-Nomination-Form.pdf \(dfa.ie\)](https://www.dfa.ie/pdsa-2021-nomination-form.pdf)

Successful nominees are expected to be announced in October 2021.

In 2020 Loretta Cosgrove from Sydney received an award for the central role she played with the Irish community in Australia which has a far reaching and transformative impact not least with the LGBT community in Sydney.

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Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

Passport Service

All passport applications must now be made online.

Passport online is now open to ALL applicants, including those resident in Australia. This includes passport renewals, first time passport applicants and children. All applications must now be made online as paper applications are no longer being processed.

To apply please follow the link: [Passport Online - Department of Foreign Affairs \(dfa.ie\)](http://Passport Online - Department of Foreign Affairs (dfa.ie))

For passport inquiries please contact our office during office hours Monday to Friday through our WebChat service available on the Embassy's website:

[Australia - Department of Foreign Affairs \(dfa.ie\)](http://Australia - Department of Foreign Affairs (dfa.ie))

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Department of Foreign Affairs

www.dfa.ie

Embassy of Ireland, Canberra

www.dfa.ie/australia

Consulate General of Ireland Sydney

www.dfa.ie/sydney

Honorary Consulate of Ireland Perth

www.consulateofirelandwa.com.au/

Australian Department of Home Affairs

www.homeaffairs.gov.au

Support Agencies:

Brisbane:

Irish Australian Support Association of Qld Inc (IASAQ)

Tel: +61 7 3391 1300
 Mobile: +61 432 087 328
 Email: info@iasaq.com.au
 Web: <https://www.iasaq.com.au/>

Melbourne:

Irish Australian Support and Resource Bureau

Tel: +61 3 9482 3865
 Email: info@iasrb.org
 Web: <https://www.iasrb.org/>

Perth:

Claddagh Association

Tel: +61 8 9249 9213
 Email: admin@claddagh.org.au
 Web: <https://claddagh.org.au/>

Dublin:

Cross Care Migrant Project

Tel: +353 (0)1 873 2844
 Email: migrantproject@crosscare.ie
 Web: <https://www.migrantproject.ie/>

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