



Ambasáid na hÉireann Canberra  
Embassy of Ireland Canberra



A Chairde ar fud na hAstráile,  
Is cúis áthais dom féin is Carmel  
céad míle fáilte a chur romhaibh  
go dtí céad eagrán Nuachtlitir  
Ambasáid na hÉireann, Canberra.

As we come to the end of one of  
the most unforgettable of years,  
it's a pleasure to have this  
opportunity to welcome you to  
our first newsletter.

As Ambassador of Ireland, I am very proud of the way the Irish community across Australia has come together to provide support and show solidarity with the more vulnerable members of our community during the COVID-19 pandemic. I would like to express my sincerest appreciation and thanks for the tireless work of staff and supporters of the Irish advice agencies in Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney and Adelaide as well as my colleagues in the Embassy, Consulate General Sydney and Honorary Consulate Perth.

You will have read reports of how Ireland has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a very difficult and challenging time for our families, friends and neighbours back home. The commitment of so many brave women and men in the front line medical and emergency services is heart-warming proof of the concept of 'Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine'.  
*Is pobal muid, na Gaeil, cibé áit ar domhan muid, go bhfuil meas is trua againn don duine eile, don strainséir is don choimhthíoch. Bímis dílis don choincheap seo an tráth dúshlánach seo níos mó ná riamh.*

Le dea-ghuí don Nollaig is Athbhliain  
Breandán Ó Caollaí is Carmel Callan  
Ambasadóir na hÉireann

# Ireland-SIDS Fellows Programme



Ireland attaches great importance to its relations with the Pacific Islands. The Embassy of Ireland, Canberra has four secondary accreditations in the Pacific Region namely Fiji, Nauru, Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. In our work, we are guided by 'Global Ireland', 2020 Asia Pacific Strategy, and the Small Island Developing States strategy (SIDS). Ireland has provided €12m to the 'Ireland Trust Fund', a specially designed fund at the Asian Development Bank to help Pacific Islands develop their resilience to climate change and natural disasters. As Fiji's Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama remarked following the impact of Cyclone Yasa, 'we are facing a climate emergency'.

As part of our support to the region, in 2020 the Embassy was delighted to be part of the SIDS Fellowships. Two fellows Ms Sophy Buinimasi and Ms Sharon Inone were the first recipients from this region awarded fellowships to study at master's level in Ireland. As a recipient of the SIDS fellowship, and as a result of their studies in Ireland they will be better placed to assist their home countries to respond to the challenges of climate change.



**Sharon Inone** is from Temotu, in the beautiful Pacific Nation of the Solomon Islands. Prior to taking up the offer of studying in Ireland, Sharon worked as a Humanitarian Coordination Assistant for United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Papua New Guinea. Sharon is currently studying for a Masters in Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security at NUI Galway.

**Sophy Buinimasi** Bula vinaka! is from Fiji and prior to taking up the offer of studying in Ireland she worked as a Senior Research Officer for the Ministry of iTaukei (Indigenous) Affairs, where her role focuses on the development of policies that will positively impact the lives of the iTaukei. Sophy is currently studying for a Masters in Environmental Leadership at NUI Galway.



# A spotlight on Melbourne



Irish Australian Support  
& Resource Bureau Inc

## Céad Míle Fáilte

The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions imposed by the Victorian State and Federal Government have made this one of the most challenging times in the history of the IASRB.

Our focus has been to nurture a sense of belonging and connection within our community. The funding provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs Ireland was an enormous benefit to help our community, assisting with emergency housing, rental assistance, food vouchers and mental health.

Social isolation has brought a different set of challenges to people of all ages, with an increase in anxiety and loneliness. Direct phone contact in the form a 'Phone Tree' provides us with the opportunity to remind people our primary goal is to support them.

Care packs represent a 'warm hug' for our seniors and people in need, to let them know they are not forgotten. The care packs included essential items as well as mind stimulus activities to provide comfort and distraction from the boredom and frustration of lock down. The care packs have been well received. The feedback has been wonderful and we are now busy making follow up calls to ensure everyone has enough of what they need.

A Wellbeing Series has been created to provide online mental health support with the help of experienced presenters. Our Sunday Sessions provided a musical feast to entertain our community and finish off the weekend on a high note.

Another exciting initiative is Seniors Connect, a programme made possible by Diaspora Support Fund Ireland. This involves an iPad Library to be circulated with senior members providing technical support.

Together, even though we are apart.

Keep well and stay safe.

Elizabeth Moore  
President - Irish Australian  
Support and Resource Bureau.  
<https://www.iasrb.org/>



**We will 'Spotlight' a different support agency in each issue!**

## Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Ireland and Papua New Guinea



On 26 October, H.E. Ambassador Ó Caollaí welcomed the High Commissioner of Papua New Guinea, H.E. John Ma'o Kali, CMG, OBE, to the Embassy to sign a Joint Communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations between Ireland and Papua New Guinea. In their exchanges prior to the signing ceremony the Ambassador and the High Commissioner discussed a range of issues including Ireland's term on the UN Security Council, Brexit, Good Friday Agreement, Climate Change, Bougainville, Development Aid and COVID-19.



# Embassy Canberra News & Events



## Half way to Saint Patrick's Day



In a first for Embassy of Ireland, Canberra, the Ambassador and Carmel hosted a 'Halfway to St Patrick's Day' dinner on 17 September which was a joint event with Pialligo Estate. In attendance were senior administrative officials, members of the Diplomatic Corps and members of the Irish and Australian community. Irish produce and Irish beverages were served at the Irish themed event.

The entertainment was provided by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and harpist Madeleine Johnson. Irish promotional slides and tourist videos were played throughout the evening. The attractive menu was full of useful information about Enterprise Ireland, Industrial Development Authority and Tourism Ireland. It also contained information on Irish support agencies across Australia and other Irish cultural groups. Particular mention and recognition was given to those involved in the fight against COVID-19.

## Celebrating NAIDOC Week

The Embassy was delighted to screen a showing of 'An Dubh ina Gheal', a documentary on Irish Aboriginal historical connections. The attendance included leaders and elected members of the Indigenous Representative Body, academics and the Vice Chancellor of Canberra University, media personalities and members of the Irish, Australian and Indigenous communities.

Our event was recognised by the National Co-Chair of NAIDOC as an important part of the week's events in his remarks. All present spoke highly of the documentary and expressed

appreciation of our event which was in their view a very honest assessment of difficult historic facts. Guests were welcomed to country with a traditional Ngunnawal Welcome to Country ceremony, which was followed by a bilingual reading of Louis de Paor's poem 'Didgeridoo'.

Professor Anne McGrath (ANU) gave a short talk in response to 'An Dubh ina Gheal' after the film.

The Ambassador in his remarks quoted from President Higgins' 2017 address to the Western Australia Parliament. 'If we are to be truly unblinking in our gaze, we must acknowledge that while most Irish emigrants experienced some measure - often a large measure - of prejudice and injustice, there were some among their number who inflicted injustice too.'



## Parliamentary Christmas Dinner

On 2 December, the Ambassador and Carmel hosted a dinner for members of the Australia Ireland Parliamentary Friendship group.

The Irish Parliamentary Group, many with strong links to Ireland, were well informed about the strength of bilateral relations between both countries. All expressed an interest in exploring how they could help bring Ireland and Australia closer together from economic, political and cultural perspectives.

The Ambassador thanked all the guests for attending, and spoke highly of the close relationship between the friendship group and the Embassy. It was agreed to meet again in the New Year.



## Christmas Reception

Ambassador Ó Caollaí and Carmel hosted an evening of festive celebration on 8 December for members of the diplomatic corps, ACT administration, members of the Irish community and the wider Australian community.

Guests were entertained with a selection of Irish songs by beautiful opera singer Rachael Duncan and renowned harpist Madeleine Johnson.

The Ambassador recited a traditional poem in Irish by Aran Islander, Mairtín Ó Direáin, 'Cuireadh do Mhuire'.



*\*All events were hosted in compliance with Covid-Safe guidelines\**

# Samhain - Halloween Events from around Australia

## Perth



## Adelaide



## Canberra





Brisbane



Sydney



**Nollaig Shona - Merry Christmas**



**Nollaig Shona - Merry Christmas from Team Ireland Canberra**



**Nollaig Shona - Merry Christmas from Team Ireland Sydney**



**Nollaig Shona - Merry Christmas from Team Ireland Perth**

It has been a hell of a year. However, knowing that we were all in this together to do the best for Irish citizens has made it all worthwhile. Thanks to Breandán and Owen for their leadership and willingness to share information and practical tips. Thanks to all our colleagues for your help and goodwill. As the song says: things can only get better.

