



# ISA NEWS AND EVENTS

February 2022

## PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

A very special welcome to the first newsletter of 2022 from the team at Irish Support Agency, where you can read about what has been happening in the past few months and get a sneak preview of what's coming up.

I'm sure many of you, like me, are overjoyed at the news the international border is opening up next week for visitors. It's been an arduous wait and I hope this significant milestone spreads optimism throughout the community that we are turning a major corner in the pandemic.

Over the past few months, we've been trying to do our best in difficult circumstances. We've seen a general increase in client outreach workload, and we have invested significant time in keeping contact with the seniors in our community. We've also been seeing great success with SOLAS which is our new mental health support service that launched at the tail end of last year. As well as client outreach work, we've been continuing with the Irish 30 webinar series (now called Dóchas), the book club, and the Rambling Irish walks. Lots of updates below on how to get involved in these.

In the coming months, we also have some fantastic one-off events - make sure to read more about Shoulder to Shoulder and International Women's Day below.

And as always, a massive thank you to the contribution that every one of you has made to the Irish Support Agency and to the Irish Australian community in NSW. In particular this month, I'd like to thank our amazing volunteer base that make so many of our programs possible!

I hope you enjoy the read!

Eoin Ryan, **ISA Vice President**



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## SENIORS CHRISTMAS LUNCH

We were delighted to have had the opportunity to convene for our annual Christmas Senior's lunch on Wednesday 8th December 2021.

Thank you to Penrith Gaels Cultural and Sporting Association for their generous grant and sponsorship of this special lunch, which is an annual highlight for many of our Seniors.

We were extended sincere welcomes by John Grieve, Club Chairman and Rosie Keane, Consul General of Ireland, Sydney who had her first opportunity to meet with many of our lovely seniors.



*Rosie Keane with some of the Penrith Gaels Board.*

We had an absolute ball in terms of reconnecting, craic and banter and were musically accompanied across the afternoon by the lovely and accomplished duo Rebecca Harkin and her fiancé Kurt Russell.

Thank you to all at Penrith Gaels for looking after us!



## COMMITTEE UPDATES



### Welcome Alan Humphreys

Alan, originally from Cork has been living in Sydney since 2012. He joined the committee in November 2021 having previously volunteered with some key fundraising initiatives for the ISA. Alan is a Senior Retail Executive having worked with major global retailers both here in Australia and abroad.

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## AGM

We were delighted to be able to hold our annual AGM on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 during which the Committee were re-elected. Thank you to Tony Kenny & Paddy McCarron for officiating. A copy of the President's Report for 2021 is available [HERE](#) (Need to Embed link).

Thank you to Eoin, our Vice President, for very kindly offering to model our new ISA Cold weather gear!



## GOOD NEWS STORY

Johnnie came to our attention in September 2021 after a referral from his good friend Andy Morgan.

Johnnie had experienced a stroke and was hospitalised in Blacktown, none of his friends able to get to him to offer support.

During this time the ISA liaised with the care team to make plans for his discharge and was able to offer a letter of support for his friend John Doherty to travel to visit him at home during the height of the COVID restrictions.

It became clear to us that Johnnie's living arrangements were far from ideal, with restricted phone coverage leaving him socially isolated and, without being able to drive, having limited access to shops.



Our Outreach team supported him with medical appointments, assisting him to access aged care support and in researching and finding a new home. Having only recently retired from work, social interaction was a really important aspect of the search.

After exploring more than a few options, Katerina and Johnnie visited a retirement village in Western Sydney, which thankfully meets all his needs, and he's now planning a move in March. We wish him many happy years in his new home!

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## DÓCHAS



The Irish Support Agency is pleased to introduce you to the new home of our monthly mental health and wellbeing webinars - Dóchas.

Dóchas, as béarla, is a word to describe hope and trust. The monthly webinars were created at a time when the Irish Australian community was struggling, and provided a gentle reminder to look after ourselves. As we ever so slowly emerge from what has been an incredibly difficult period, we realise that there are still so many stories to be told, voices to be

heard and concerns to address.

With that in mind, we presented our first session of 2022,

### **Riding the Wave; understanding anxiety, navigating life, and regaining resilience.**

We were joined by Helen O'Byrne. Hailing from Dublin, Helen is a highly experienced registered psychotherapist and trauma therapist. Helen recognises that painful experiences are often stored in the body, with the inability to move forward and an overwhelming sense of just not feeling right. Helen will talk to us about the challenges we have all faced, and how we can integrate some powerful coping strategies and look towards a brighter future and re-emerge as more resilient beings.



### **7<sup>th</sup> March – International Women's Day – A celebration of everyday heroes**

This year, to celebrate International Women's Day, we would like to invite submissions from the community to honour the wonderful women in your life and local area.

Marked annually on **March 8<sup>th</sup>**, International Women's Day (IWD) is one of the most important days of the year to celebrate women's achievements.

We would like to pay homage and respect to the everyday heroes in our life, women who go out of their way to help someone, women who go above and beyond what is expected of them, or perhaps a woman who has been solid support to you over the years. It can also be a woman, who has an extraordinary life story to tell, someone who accomplished great things, despite the odds being against them.

To make a submission, please complete the form included with your newsletter, or you can go to [www.irishsupportagency.org.au/dochas](http://www.irishsupportagency.org.au/dochas). Submissions must be received by Friday the 25<sup>th</sup> February.

## St Patrick's Day Mass



Mass will be held on St Patrick's Day, Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am in St. Mary's Cathedral, Sydney and will be led by Bishop Terry Brady.

Please download the Service NSW App on your mobile device as check-in will be required on entry to the Cathedral.

At the moment, facemasks are mandatory in places of worship.

## Sydney St Patrick's Day Festival

First Fleet Park, The Rocks, Sydney 11-6pm Sunday, 20th March 2022.

The Sydney St Patrick's Day Festival is returning to The Rocks for a family-friendly, free event on Sunday, 20th March 2022.

Festival goers can enjoy some toe-tapping live music from some of Sydney's best-known Irish acts, world class Irish dance performances, taste some of the best Irish food Sydney has to offer.



This year also sees the return of the parade to the St Patrick's Day festival and a colourful and vibrant display of all aspects of Irish culture is being planned.

## ISA Community Stall / Tea Tent

The Irish Support Agency will have a dedicated community tent within the festival area at First Fleet Park. We look forward to meeting all of supporters in person and sharing information about what we are currently up to, so please stop by and say hello!

We are also delighted to be manning the Tea Tent, and very much look forward to having a chat over a nice cup of Irish tea.

## SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

### Community, Conversation and Craic for Irish Men in Sydney.

The ISA Health & Wellbeing group invite you to our next flagship event for the Irish Community. This time it's all about the men, with a fun and inspiring morning to help you connect and reflect. There is no pressure and no judgment; just a feel-good and educational environment to dip your toe into!



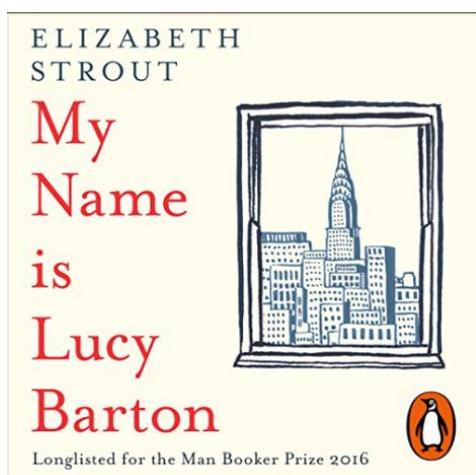
#### ★ Highlights include ★

- Online screening of the feel-good documentary 'Happy Sad Man' to watch at home before the event.
- Learn how elite athletes achieve peak performance through body & mind.
- Working smarter not harder for your financial well-being.
- Real stories of building resilience during challenging times.
- Find out how to help a mate who's not feeling so great.
- Plus much more.

Details: Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> February at 10am - 1pm in Randwick Community Centre.

Tickets are just \$15 and includes entry, film screening and lunch. Tickets can be purchased here <https://www.irishsupportagency.org.au/events/2022/2/8/shoulder-to-shoulder> or by calling the office on 02 9300 8019.

## BOOK CLUB



Our book club is held on the last Wednesday of each month in the Gaelic Club.

Each month, we choose one book to review, and seek to include all genres! It's a great way to meet like-minded people and everyone is welcome.

We are currently reading, **My Name is Lucy Barton**, by Elizabeth Strout. If you would like to attend our next meeting, in person in the Gaelic Club on Wednesday the 23<sup>rd</sup> February, please email Una at [project@irishsupportagency.org.au](mailto:project@irishsupportagency.org.au) or call 02 9300 8019.

## THE RAMBLING IRISH



The Rambling Irish is a new, social walking group created by a team of volunteers for the ISA.

They aim to complete 1 walk per month, in and around the Greater Sydney area. It will be a great way to meet new people and to explore parts of this beautiful city.

Each walk has been carefully chosen to be accessible for all abilities.

On Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> February, we held our walk from Watsons Bay to Dover Heights, along the Federation Cliff track, a leisurely 5km walk.

Everyone is welcome to join our walks, so please keep an eye out for our next one in March!



## CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Thank you so much to everyone who made a generous donation to our Christmas Appeal.

We raised \$2611.35 in total.

All of the fundraising efforts go towards our client support services, including food vouchers, and accommodation assistance.

## COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

A big thank you to The Grand Hotel, Bondi Junction, for their generous donation of \$800 raised through their ongoing raffles and their Irish New Year event.

Thank you so much for your ongoing support.

All funds donated will go directly towards our client support services.

**If you are interested in fundraising on behalf of the ISA, please contact Una on 0435 917 260 or email [project@irishsupportagency.org.au](mailto:project@irishsupportagency.org.au).**

## RECOGNITION

In early December, we received a beautiful letter of acknowledgement from a client's family who recently received assistance from the ISA. The letter was sent to President Michael D Higgins and Minister for the Diaspora Colm Brophy.

We wanted to share this with you, our members, as we are so honoured to be spoken of so highly and it also gives you an insight into the work that we do.

*Dear President Higgins and TD Colm Brophy,*

*I wanted to take some time to write to you to update you on some wonderful work being done by the Irish Support Agency in Sydney, Australia. My sister has been in Australia for almost ten years and is married to an Australian. About 5 weeks ago we learned that she has been in a very dysfunctional relationship and living under awful conditions and a victim of domestic violence. She was paralysed with panic and fear, in particular for the safety of her young child.*

*I reached out to Paula in the Irish Support Agency in Sydney to ask if they could assist in any way. I hadn't expected to hear back immediately but within the hour my phone rang, which was the middle of the night for Paula. It is hard to put into words what Paula's call meant to me and my family. She assured me, that they would hold her hand and be her family in Sydney until we could be there, which was an unknown amount of time due to Covid. It's so simple, but as anyone who has lived away will know, the power in hearing an Irish accent offering support felt like a guardian angel coming to his aid.*

*Over the next month, they assisted her with emotional, psychological, and practical advice. They even supported her on the start of what will likely be a long journey through family court. She now has full custody of her beautiful child, and my Mam is preparing to visit for Christmas. Again, the process of applying for a visa and an exemption was simplified for us through the directions offered from Paula.*

*With so many of us having loved ones living in Sydney and that distance being exaggerated with the struggles posed by the pandemic, I wanted to highlight the quiet and background work this Agency are doing for our family and friends in Australia. Paula and Katerina have demonstrated kindness, care, and a huge commitment to their work. They provided us with advice and information we could never have found for her from Dublin. We hope to assist by asking our friends and family to think of the charity for their Christmas donations but also wanted to put a big spotlight on them and I hope by reaching out to you both, we can do that.*

*Kind regards,*

*Hannah*

**The Irish Support Agency NSW Inc is registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission ABN 70 880 566 535.** We acknowledge the financial support provided to us by the Emigrant Support Program of the Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland which enables us to make a significant difference to the Irish Community in New South Wales every year.



**Government of Ireland**  
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eacetracha  
Department of Foreign Affairs

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