



Queensland Irish Association

Newsletter

August 2026



Direct from Trinity College Dublin, Tritones a capella group worked in association with Queensland Irish Association to present a concert at Gilhooley's Irish Bar on July 31. Pictured with the group are QIA Director Mary Allen Corbett and her daughter, QIA Member Isla Corbett. More photos on page 4.

Well done, Jeff Spender

Punctuation matters. Without the comma in the headline, it would be a description of Jeff Spender's status at the end of his roast, rather than the congratulations it is intended to convey.

One hundred and fifty members and friends gathered in the Ithaca Room at Brisbane City Hall at lunch on 24 July for an entertaining farewell for the now retired President of the QIA.

Becoming President

Jeff Spender became President in the most unusual of circumstances. He was named as President of the Association in Supreme Court orders that terminated the liquidation of the QIA and returned control to its members. After a general meeting of members to approve the arrangement, Jeff became President on 28 July, 2017.

While many contributed to the resuscitation of the Association, the QIA would not exist today without Jeff Spender lending his stature as a former Federal Court judge to its



Glenice and Jeff Spender with their daughter Fiona at the Roast.

restoration.

He was unchallenged as President until his decision to retire on 14 April this year.

His speech concerning the circumstances of his presidency at the roast will remain an important historical record of the QIA.

During Jeff's presidency, the QIA celebrated its 125th anniversary, its history by Rod and Robin Sullivan was published and he entertained Irish President, Michael D. Higgins and Sinn Fein leader, Mary Lou

McDonald, on visits to Brisbane. That is in addition to his long-term contributions to the QIA during its administration and before, including responding to the principal speakers at the St Patrick's Eve Dinner – a role he inherited from the late Sir James Killen.

Lining up to speak

A stellar array of speakers participated in the roast. It was fitting that the first was The Hon. Justice Glenn Martin AM KC who was the Supreme Court justice who made the orders restoring the QIA to its members and appointing Jeff as President.

Special thanks are due to all our speakers. They included Chancellor of the Australian Catholic University, Martin Daubney AM KC; Former Australian High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Attorney-General of Australia, The Hon. George

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Queensland Irish Association

Queens Wharf Precinct History Tour



Queensland Irish Association
& The Royal Historical Society of Queensland presents
Queens Wharf Precinct History Walking Tour

starting at the Commissariat Store Museum,
115 William Street, Brisbane
on Tuesday, 18 August 2026
from 10am to 11.30am



RHSQ
The Royal Historical Society of Queensland

*\$20 per person, pay on the day, includes admission to the museum.
RSVP by Sunday, 16 August to mary@queenslandirish.com.au*

Well done, Jeff Spender

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Brandis KC; Former Justice of the High Court of Australia and Former Chief Justice of the Federal Court, The Hon. Patrick Keane AC KC; Former Attorney-General of Queensland, The Hon. Matt Foley KC; and Auxiliary Bishop Emeritus of Brisbane, Brian Finnegan.

The Irish Ambassador and co-Patron of the QIA, Her Excellency Ms. Fiona Flood was an apology as she was in Ireland at the time. The Embassy of Ireland was ably represented by the Second Secretary and Deputy Head of Mission, Sam Roberts.

The Premier and Lord Mayor were also apologies but sent messages of congratulation.

The City Council was represented by local Councillor and QIA member, Vicki Howard, who also spoke. The QIA is particularly grateful for sponsorship from the City Hall and King George Square Community Support Fund which helped to defray the cost of the function.

A highlight was the recital of a poem of tribute written by Queensland Irish Choir member, Terry O'Connor, presented to Jeff by Terry and Choir President, Morag Wilson. The QIA Dancers also sent a message of congratulations.

Special mention should also be made of the attendance of the President of the Darling Downs Irish Club, Gerry McCann, and Sandra McCann who came down from Toowoomba for the event.

End of an era

The lunch and speeches were a fitting tribute to the contributions made by Jeff to the QIA, and not just as President.

Congratulations and thanks were also extended by all speakers to Glenice Spender who, as well as making Jeff available, made her own serious contribution to the Association.

Delightfully, Fiona Spender was able to join her parents from Sydney for the occasion.

Jeff Spender's resignation from the presidency of the QIA marks the end of an era. It was a tumultuous time, not of Jeff's making, but through his efforts and those of many others, the QIA has survived and is secure, if not yet prospering as we would all hope.

In his resignation letter that was printed in the May newsletter, Jeff expressed his only regret as not yet securing a home for the QIA. The process of finding a suitable home is the next stage of the restoration of the Association. Alas, it will not be a replica of Tara House as has been made clear at a number of AGMs but that is the continuing task for Board and members.

Best wishes to Jeff and Glenice for a well-deserved retirement from the Board and all members of the Queensland Irish Association.

A Quick Note

I was fortunate to attend the Winter Concert of the Queensland Irish Choir on Saturday, 25 July – the day after the Spender roast. The Winter Concert traditionally includes music from a range of Celtic homelands and this concert did not disappoint with music and songs from Scotland, Wales, Cornwall, United States and Nova Scotia as well as from Ireland.

There isn't enough space in this newsletter to do justice to the Choir and Concert so a longer report will appear in the next edition.

The Choir's Christmas Celebration is scheduled for 14 November – a date to keep free. More details will also be provided in future editions.

Congratulations to the Queensland Irish Choir on a magnificent Winter Concert.

**Graham Moloney, President,
Queensland Irish Association.**

Calendar

18 August 2026

Queensland Irish Association and Royal Historical Society of Queensland Queens Wharf Precinct History Walking Tour, 10am to 11.30am from The Commissariat Store Museum. Cost: \$20pp including entry to the Museum.

5 September 2026

Back to Limestone - Ipswich History Conference by Royal Historical Society of Queensland and Ipswich Historical Society. From 8.30am at 1 Nicholas St, Ipswich. Tickets from \$35 at <https://www.eventbrite.com.au/o/15814931979>

11 October 2026

Brisbane Celtic Festival, Moorlands Park, Auchenflower. www.ccaq.org.au

16 - 18 October 2026

Irish Film Festival Australia at Palace Barracks, Petrie Terrace. <https://irishfilmfestival.com.au/>

5 November 2026

Queensland Irish Association presents Samhain/Halloween Irish ghost tour of Toowong Cemetery, in association with Haunts of Brisbane and Friends of South Brisbane Cemetery. Full details TBC.

14 November 2026

Queensland Irish Association Annual General Meeting, Wests Rugby Union Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong.

17 - 18 April 2027

Queensland Manx Viking Festival, Allpass Parade, Shorncliffe. www.manxvikingfestival.com

First Friday of the month

Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band play at Friday Irish Sessions in Gilhooley's, Brisbane. See www.facebook.com/QIAPB.

Second Wednesday of the month

Tara Hall Dining Club, The Ship Inn, Sidon Street, South Brisbane. Contact Secretary Roger Thornton rjthornton8@bigpond.com or 0408 878 938

Last Saturday of the month

Tigh Gaelach luncheon at Easts Leagues Club, Coorparoo between February and November at 11am. Contact President Michelle FitzPatrick on mitchfitzpatrick@hotmail.com or 0403 384 223

Trinity College Dublin a capella group teams up with QIA for gig



by Mary Allen, Director, QIA

Direct from Ireland's most famous and prestigious university, Trinity College Dublin, and in association with Queensland Irish Association, Trinitones – the pioneers of 'popular' a capella performance in Ireland – played a gig at Gilhoolley's Irish Pub and Restaurant in Brisbane on Friday, 31st July 2026.

Trinitones are Ireland's premier a capella group. Composed entirely of students from Trinity College Dublin, the group combines a wide range of traditional and contemporary music. Having amassed a significant social media following since their establishment in 2012, Trinitones have performed all over Ireland at festivals such as Electric Picnic and Trinity Ball and across the world, with tours of South America, Japan, Australia and the United States.

Since the group's last tour of Australia in 2022, they reached new heights, releasing their first full-length album last year and performing in Yankee Stadium, New York.

Trinitones sure put on a show!



Walking through Brisbane's past with QIA special heritage tour



by Mary Allen, Director, QIA

The Queensland Irish Association is joining forces with the Royal Historical Society of Queensland for a special heritage walk exploring the story of Brisbane's earliest days.

QIA members are invited to take part in an exclusive Queen's Wharf Precinct Heritage Tour on Tuesday, 18 August, discovering the historic buildings, people and events that shaped the city from its colonial beginnings.

Led by the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, the two-hour guided walk will take participants through one of Brisbane's most historically significant precincts — the area where the city first began.

Starting and finishing at the Commissariat Store Museum, the tour will explore 11 heritage buildings and sites, revealing stories from Brisbane's convict era, colonial government, commerce and community life.

Among the highlights are the Commissariat Store, one of Brisbane's oldest surviving buildings; the DPI Building; the site of Pet-

tigrew's Sawmill, once one of the city's major industries; Parliament House; the Queensland Club; the Treasury Building; and other important landmarks.

For QIA members, the tour provides a fascinating opportunity to look at Brisbane's history through a different lens.

Irish immigrants were among the convicts, labourers, merchants, politicians, public servants and community leaders who helped build colonial Brisbane. Many of the buildings and institutions around Queen's Wharf have links to the Irish story of Queensland, from the early convict period through to the influence of Irish politicians, professionals and business people.

The Royal Historical Society of Queensland, founded in 1913, has played a vital role in preserving and sharing Queensland's history, and this partnership with the Queensland Irish Association continues the QIA's commitment to celebrating and promoting the heritage of Irish Queenslanders.

The tour will involve approxi-

mately three kilometres of walking, so participants are encouraged to wear comfortable footwear and bring water. Sun protection, including hats, sunscreen and suitable clothing, is recommended.

A ticket for the precinct tour also includes entry to the Commissariat Store Museum, allowing visitors to explore one of Brisbane's most important historical collections before or after the walk.

This promises to be an enjoyable and informative outing for QIA members — a chance to discover the stories hidden behind familiar Brisbane landmarks and to walk in the footsteps of those who helped build the city we know today.

Queen's Wharf Precinct Tour

Date: Tuesday, 18 August

Tickets: \$20 includes museum entry, pay on the day.

RSVP: by Sunday, 16 August to mary@queenslandirish.com.au

Contact us

We welcome content from Members and friends in this newsletter.

If you have news or an article you would like to see included, email the editor, our public relations officer Mary Allen, at mary@queenslandirish.com.au

You can also reach us through our website, www.queenslandirish.com.au, and on our social media pages.

Another great way to interact with QIA is by joining our Facebook [group](#), Queensland Irish Association Friends and Supporters.

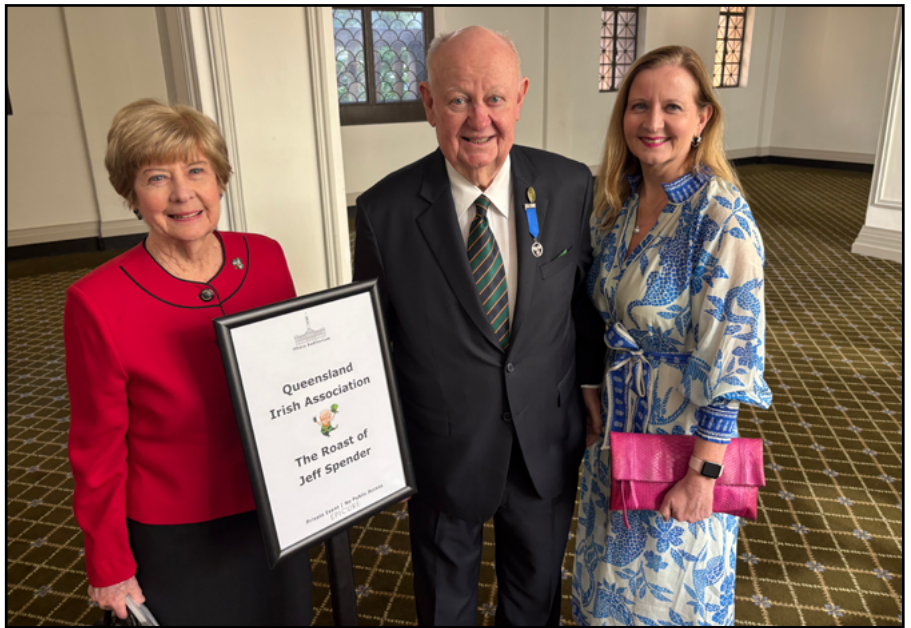
Editor and designer: Mary Allen.

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QIA Roast of Jeff Spender at Brisbane City Hall



The Roast of Jeff Spender was held at the Ithaca Room, Brisbane City Hall, on July 24. Pictures (this page): Mary Allen



QIA Roast of Jeff Spender at Brisbane City Hall



The Roast of Jeff Spender saw a full attendance. Pictures (this page): Good Times Photography



Having a Function

We can add a whole lot more to your evening

Photo's (6inX8in) printed the same night and returned before the function finishes.
 We will do PR photos of the event at no extra cost.
 (subject to numbers)
 Studio lights if requested will be set up before guests arrive.
 There is no additional cost beyond the price of the photo's.
 This is a great way to have a memory of the evening.

Good Times Network Photography
 Phone 0401450977
 www.goodtimesbrisbane.com



Vale Michele Bourke who brought joy to QIA

by Mary Allen, Director, QIA

We were heartbroken here at Queensland Irish Association to share with our Members and friends last month that our former director and long-term Member and volunteer, Michele Bourke, passed away on July 7, having been ill for some time.

There was a large attendance at Michele's funeral, and many fine stories about her life and work. Michele didn't want a long speech at the celebration of her life, and while it is hard to keep it short, here is a brief tribute to Michele's work at QIA and a look at some of the events she organised and attended. Her joy in her work and involvement in the community is obvious in these pictures, which speak for themselves.

Michele joined the board of the QIA in 2022, serving as a director. Before that she had been a long-term voluntary returning officer for the Association, as well as a long-time active member.

Michele had a thirst for knowledge about Irish culture. She was always fascinated by the stories at our Irish cemetery tours, and she was also central to organising our Bloomsday and Bealtaine celebrations, as well as helping out at the QIA's many other events.

She had a particular passion for the annual Irish Film Festival Australia, where she would hold fort at the QIA stand in



Michele selling raffle tickets at our St Patrick's Eve Dinner, above, and, below from left, at the St Patrick's Day Parade, Brisbane Celtic Festival and Saint Brigid's Celebration film screening.

the cinema, hand out flyers and chat to members, and try to watch as many Irish films in one weekend as was humanly possible! She also organised nibbles and drinks for members after to digest the content of those films.

Michele was dedicated to the re-forming QIA's Historical and Cultural

Committee and among the changes she made during her time on the board, she initiated a relationship between QIA and Brigidine College in Toowong by starting an annual and very successful St Brigid's Day

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Vale Michele Bourke who brought joy to QIA



Michele representing the QIA and volunteering at events, clockwise from above, at the Saint Patrick's Day Parade; Irish Film Festival Australia drinks; Irish Tour of Toowong Cemetery, Brisbane Celtic Festival, Ireland Funds Australia lunch and Bealtaine drinks.



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film screening event at the school. This involved showing a contemporary Irish film, with a Q&A session afterwards and then a huge spread of tea, coffee, sandwiches and cakes. Michele went above and beyond to deliver a fun day that needed a large gathering of volunteers to make it all run smoothly. The event all the hallmarks of Michele, combining so many elements she loved – Saint Brigid who represents femininity, strength and religious devotion, Irish culture, film, learning, community effort, good food and great conversation.

For years she also took part in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade to honour her ancestor who came over to Australia on the Erin Go Bragh ship.

Whenever a helping hand was needed, you could always count on Michele.

As well as being an efficient and reliable worker, Michele always brought joy, fun and enthusiasm to QIA events, and in the best Irish tradition, she loved the chat. The Blarney Stone was never needed to enhance Michele's natural-born Irish gift of the gab.

She will be sorely missed by all at QIA.

Vale our friend Michele, ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam dílis.



Meet our new President, Graham Moloney

Graham Moloney, the newly elected QIA President replacing Hon. Jeff Spender, is a third generation member of the Association.

The son of QIA life member, Leo Moloney, and Margaret Moloney (both now deceased) he has been a member of the QIA for virtually his entire adult life.

“My earliest recollections of the Irish Club come from when my cousin, Anne, started learning Irish dancing in the club when she was five. I must have been about nine at the time and I have been around the Association ever since.”

“My uncle, Kevin, started researching family history and introduced the entire family to Irish folk music like the Clancy Brothers and much, much more. When Kevin died far too early in 1981, Dad (Leo) picked up the baton with gusto, involving himself in the Dancer’s committee, then on the committee of the QIA, including as Vice-President and Trustee at various times, and then researching the history of the QIA.”

“My branch of the Moloneys came to Queensland from Clare in 1862. There is a Moloney Road in Waterford. At the end of that road, by the banks of the Logan River, is where James and Patrick Moloney took up selections. The Irish connections are old but still strong – my four grandparents were a Moloney, a McNamara, a Mullen and a Finnegan. All sixteen of my great-great grandparents were Irish born.”

By profession a teacher, Graham spent most of his working life in the Queensland Teachers Union as industrial advocate, deputy secre-



QIA President Graham Moloney with his wife Mary.

tary and then General Secretary for 9 years. He retired at the start of 2021.

He is also an experienced company director. He was a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors from 1999 to 2022 and graduated its company director course in 2018.

Graham was previously a di-

rector of the Queensland Irish Association from 2001 to 2005. Those members who attend the St. Patrick’s Eve Dinner will know him as the Master of Ceremonies at the dinner from 2004 to this year.

He is married to Mary, with three adult children and six grandchildren.

Queensland Manx Society seeks volunteers to build Celtic boats

By Mary Allen, Director, QIA

The Queensland Manx Society Inc. is calling on volunteers to help bring an ancient maritime tradition back to life as it embarks on an ambitious project to build traditional currachs and coracles ahead of a new Viking and Celtic festival in Queensland.

Working in partnership with the Wooden Boats Association of Queensland, the society has launched a six-year boatbuilding program that will see volunteers construct a fleet of traditional vessels for use in cultural displays and racing events.

The project forms part of plans for the proposed Queensland Manx Viking Festival, which will celebrate the Isle of Man's unique Celtic and Norse heritage through land-based activities and a regatta showcasing traditional boats.

Society president Nigel Jeffares, who is also the Tara Hall Dining Club president, said the organisation is keen to hear from anyone interested in learning traditional boatbuilding skills or helping crew the vessels once they are launched.

"We're inviting people from Celtic, Gaelic and maritime organisations, along with anyone interested in traditional wooden boats, to become part of the project," he said.

"Whether you have experience or simply want to learn, we'd love to hear from you."

While the festival will celebrate the Isle of Man's Viking past, currachs represent an even older Celtic maritime tradition that stretches back thousands of years.

The currach is one of the oldest surviving boat designs in Europe. Traditionally built from a lightweight wooden frame covered with animal hides coated in tar, modern currachs are generally covered with canvas or other waterproof materials. Their



Fishermen in a currach with outboard motor on their way back to the harbour on the Irish west coast in the summer of 1986. Picture: Wikipedia Commons

remarkably light construction allows them to be carried ashore by just a few people, while their flexible hulls make them exceptionally capable in rough Atlantic waters.

For centuries, currachs were the lifeblood of coastal communities across Ireland and the Isle of Man, used for fishing, transporting live-stock, carrying turf and making journeys between islands. They have also become woven into Irish folklore and history, with the best-known story being that of St Brendan the Navigator, who is said to have sailed a leather-covered currach across the Atlantic in the sixth century.

Coracles, which are also planned for the Queensland project, are another ancient Celtic craft. Smaller and usually circular or oval in shape, they have been used for thousands of years on the rivers of Wales, western Britain and Ireland. Their lightweight design made them ideal for inland fishing and easy to carry from one waterway to another.

The Queensland Manx Society Inc. believes racing these traditional craft will become a distinctive feature of its future festival, celebrating the

shared maritime heritage of the Celtic nations.

The boatbuilding initiative is also part of a broader renewal for the society, which recently relocated to the Sandgate Water Activities Centre at Shorncliffe. The move has helped attract new members and provided a permanent base for events, including this year's successful Tynwald Day celebrations.

In another milestone, the society has digitised much of its historical archive and deposited records with the State Library of Queensland to preserve the history of the Manx community in Australia.

With volunteers now being sought for the currach and coracle project, the society hopes to build not only a fleet of traditional boats, but also a community of people committed to preserving one of the Celtic world's oldest maritime traditions.

The Queensland Manx Viking Festival will take place on 17th to 18th April 2027 at Shorncliffe, Queensland. For further information, contact Nigel (QMS President): qldmanx@gmail.com or go to <https://queenslandmanx.org/>

Celtic Council of Australia (Queensland) Inc
ABN 83 434 304 383



proudly presents

2026 CCAQ

BRISBANE CELTIC FESTIVAL

Moorlands Park, Auchenflower, Brisbane

Sunday 11 October 2026 8.45am to 3.30pm



WHAT'S ON

Celtic Music and Dance from the Eight
Celtic Nations,

Massed Pipe Bands

Kids Celtic Games

Tartan Clothes, Kilts: please wear yours

Prizes: Best Celtic Dressed Man, Woman,
Boy & Girl

Australian Scottish Community Qld Inc
- International Tartan Day

**FREE
ADMISSION**

WHAT TO BRING

Hats, Umbrellas, Chairs/Blanket, Water
and Picnic Lunch if desired.

Light Refreshments available from food
vans on site. Variety of vendor tents.

HOW TO GET THERE

Train: Auchenflower Train Station

Bus: Coronation Drive, such as routes
444 or 445. Get off at a stop near
Land St or Wesley Hospital

CityCat Ferry: Get off at Regatta Hotel



**Standing Stones
Celtic Nations Monument**

Information contact

CCAQ President:

Mavis Williams CyC

email:

. mkw.pinklady.dua@hotmail.com

Phone: 07 3849 8271

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