



Queensland Irish Association

# Newsletter

April 2021

## Women and young lead the charge to join QIA online

Queensland Irish Association is very fortunate to have Mary Allen as our Public Relations Officer. Mary has revolutionised how the Association has communicated with you, its Members, and with the whole Irish community.

Mary reports: "Our online presence reaches far more people than our traditional methods, such as email. Our Facebook group now has nearly 600 members, our Facebook page insights section reports that our posts have reached 6,266 people since the start of March (which is a 66% increase on the month before) and our Facebook page has 70 new likes. My Irish Queenslander page that I use to also promote QIA stories, has reached 15,062 people in March. So, our reach on Facebook is huge, and that's without even counting the people reading our Twitter account and looking at the website."

Mary Allen, a former newspaper editor, has set up a new Facebook group of QIA Friends and Supporters on Facebook to make it even easier to keep in touch with our Members.

In just the first day alone, 432 people joined, many of whom were people who had not previously been following QIA's Facebook page.

Members can post stories, photos and comments in the group also, making it much more interactive than a traditional Facebook page. It has news of



Enjoying themselves at our 123rd annual Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner were QIA Public Relations Officer Mary Allen, with Rory Corbett and our Vice-President Seamus Sullivan, who was made a QIA Life Member on the night.

community events and stories of interest to Irish Australian people.

This new group is a big bonus to us in reaching out to young Irish Australians - more than two-thirds of the members are aged from 25 to 45. The majority of those who have joined are women - about 70%.

The vast majority of the group members are living in Brisbane, followed by Gold Coast, Toowoomba, Sunshine Coast and Sydney.

More than 4,000 people follow our

traditional Facebook page, a number that has been consistently climbing. You can view our Facebook page by clicking [here](#).

And our new Facebook group is attracting hundreds of members. It's called Queensland Irish Association Friends and Supporters Group and you can join it by clicking [here](#).

We have a new Twitter page also, which you can join by clicking [here](#).

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Snapshots of our wonderful 123rd annual St Patrick's Eve Dinner at the Mercure Pullman Hotel, Brisbane. Clockwise from top left, our VIPs enter the Presidential Ballroom led by pipers from QIA Pipe Band, nine wonderful dancers from QIA Dancers ready to perform, the Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier of Queensland, giving a speech, QIA Pipe Band welcome guests at the entrance to the hotel, QIA Pipe Band perform in the ballroom, and QIA Dancers in action in the ballroom. Pictures: Mary Allen and QIA Dancers Facebook page

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We have just concluded a most successful St Patrick's Eve Dinner. The Dinner was graced by the presence of the Governor of Queensland Paul de Jersey AC, the Premier of Queensland, Annastacia Palaszczuk, and the Ambassador of Ireland, his Excellency Breandán Ó Caollaí.

This is one of those rare times in the long history of the Association that all three of our important dignitaries have attended a St Patrick's Eve Dinner.

Robert Ward, a Life Member of QIA and a former President, has forwarded the following report of the dinner.

### St Patrick's Eve Dinner 2021

The 2021 St Patrick's Eve Dinner was held on Tuesday 16 March 2021 at the Pullman Brisbane Hotel, King George Square.

The Queensland Irish Association has continued this tradition for the past 123 years.

A COVID19 limited capacity of 340 QIA members and guests were in attendance in celebratory mood, and this made for a convivial evening once again, with a joyful atmosphere in the Presidential Ballroom.

St Patrick's Feast Day was anticipated amidst cultural camaraderie, music, dance and song, with wonderful speeches and anthems, as well as appropriate refreshments.

QIA President Hon Jeffrey Spender welcomed distinguished guests including:

His Excellency Hon Paul de Jersey AC, Governor of Queensland;

His Excellency Breandán Ó Caollaí, Ambassador of Ireland and his wife Carmel Callan;

The Honourable Annastacia Palaszczuk MP, Premier of Queensland; Sam O'Connor MP, representing the Leader of the Opposition in Queensland;

Justice Martin Daubney AM of the Supreme Court of Queensland, representing the Chief Justice of

Queensland; Councillor Vikki Howard, representing the Lord Mayor of Brisbane Adrian Schinner;

Bishop Brian Finnigan, representing Archbishop of Brisbane Mark Coleridge;

Asst Commissioner Maurice Carless APM, representing the Queensland Police Commissioner;

Kerry O'Brien - renowned journalist and broadcaster;

Rev Dr David Pitman AM.

Apologies were received from the Prime Minister, Leader of the Federal Opposition, Brisbane Archbishops Coleridge and Aspinall and Lord Mayor Adrian Schinner, who was a last-minute inability.

Kerry O'Brien was invited to propose the toast to "Australia Our Nation". In doing so, he delivered an erudite presentation linking historical Irish experiences with those of early Australian colonial history.

Ambassador HE Breandán Ó Caollaí proposed the toast to "The Day We Celebrate" and led the singing of the Irish National Anthem in Irish.

Hon Justice Martin Daubney responded to both toasts with his usual style and aplomb.

Outstanding addresses were received from the Governor, the Premier of Queensland, and Cr Vikki Howard, representing the Lord Mayor.

Rev Dr David Pitman AM once again completed the formal addresses on an entertaining and inspiring note.

The Queensland Irish Association Irish Dancers and QIA Pipe Band gave another superb display of Irish culture and the Bob Mac Trio led the gathering in community singing throughout the evening.

QIA is especially grateful to Co-Patron Ambassador HE Breandán Ó Caollaí for presenting Life Membership badges to those recently elected to that rank – John Leahy, Seamus Sullivan, Jeffrey Spender and Colin "Buzz" Ennis.

Special thanks must go to Master of Ceremonies Graham Moloney, for once again ensuring the smooth running of the evening, particularly with this year's packed programme, within the allotted time frame.

Sincere thanks are due to all those mentioned above, as well as the management and staff of the Pullman Brisbane Hotel, and all the members of the St Patrick's Eve Dinner Committee, for their contributions to the success of the 2021 Dinner.

*Robert Ward  
for the St Patrick's Eve Dinner  
Committee*

Robert Ward is deserving of the greatest thanks from each and every Member of the QIA.

Robert, almost singlehandedly, organised the 2021 St Patrick's Eve Dinner. The Dinner posted the "House Full" sign for the event at the closing date for applications.

The 2020 Dinner was the **last** public event at the Pullman before COVID caused the closure of such events, and the 2021 Dinner was the **first** public event at the Pullman when such events were able to resume.

Finally, Members are reminded of the QIA Drinks function on Friday, 9th April 2021 at the Grand Central Hotel, opposite Anzac Square, from 4pm. A flyer for the event is attached.

With the warmest of good wishes,

*Jeff Spender,  
President,  
Queensland Irish Association*

**If you attended our St Patrick's Eve Dinner and had your photograph taken by a professional photographer on the night, you can contact the photographers to purchase your picture at [www.goodtimesbrisbane.com](http://www.goodtimesbrisbane.com), phone 07 3217 3300.**



# Queensland Irish Association

## *Members' Friday Gathering*



Invitation to members and potential members of QIA

Join us on Friday, 9th April from 4pm at  
Grand Central Hotel, 270 Ann Street, Brisbane

Live music and entertainment!

*Numbers are limited so bookings are essential,  
by email to [irishevents@hotmail.com](mailto:irishevents@hotmail.com)*

