

Annual Report: MFS Irish Set Dancing Group (ISD) 2023

After several years of disruption due to Covid-19, ISD has returned close to 'full strength'; attracting around 10 new dancers; around half becoming MFS members. These new dancers have largely offset the loss of some previous regulars who have not returned since Covid.

The group contributed a surplus of \$2,174 to MFS funds.

Classes and general activities

Class numbers increased, ranging from 12 to 22, and averaging 17. (Average 11 last year.)

ISD contributed to MFS cost-savings by reducing hall hire from 3 to 2 hours per class. (A response to the MFS Organisers Meeting on 29 June 2022 discussing options to address MFS falling numbers and rising hall hire costs.)

To increase attendance, ISD trialed two free two-hour beginner classes on 6 and 13 July (while regular classes were on an end of term break). These attracted 10 new dancers, with around half becoming regular attendees at class. In the lead up to the October dance weekend, we offered these free beginner classes again on 28 September and 5 October. These were very popular with the newer dancers as preparation for the annual dance weekend.

As the number of our newer dancers began increasing this year, so did the demand for beginner classes on an ad hoc basis. Thanks to the North Canberra Baptist Church Hall and MFS Treasurer and Committee, ISD is able to offer half-hour beginner classes on demand (with prior notice to NCBC and its agreement).

By reducing hall hire and increasing numbers, ISD has been able to keep entry costs at \$8 for MFS members and \$9 for non-members. The first two classes for new dancers are free. There continues to be a very good response to the option to purchase a 10-class pass (paying in advance for 10 classes) which reduces the price per class to \$7 for MFS members and \$8 for non-members.

Deck dances (a social occasion held once or twice a year at some-one's home) were still in abeyance, while confidence about gatherings in smaller spaces and homes recovers from Covid concerns. We are hopeful deck dances might resume in the coming financial year. These informal and social events contribute to the social cohesion of the group and to retaining the interest of newer dancers.

16th dance weekend (Hall Pavilion, October 2022)

Anticipating there might be fewer numbers in 2022 (following a two-year hiatus), ISD organised a scaled-down event in order to keep within costs. The program included two days of workshops with experienced teachers and two ceilis with live music by the *Ian Hayden and Friends Ceili Band*. Around 65 people attended (compared to 80+ at pre-Covid weekends). The event produced a surplus of \$656.

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed to ISD being able to successfully wether two years of difficulties due to Covid. Thank you to all those who came up with ideas, cajoled others and 'got stuck in' themselves to try new things and make this year a success. Your creativity, enthusiasm and persistence 'paid off'.

ISD organisers Paul Wayper, Christine Briton, Bec Tarrant and Peter Stringfellow.
23 July 2023