

Annual Report: MFS Irish Set Dancing Group (ISD) 2019

Key activities in 2018-19 were four terms of weekly classes, four end-of-term mini-ceilis, one deck-dance and the Canberra annual Irish Set Dancing weekend. These activities produced a total surplus of \$3,183. (Receipts \$15,019; Payments \$11,835.)

Activities

Wednesday evening classes were held during ACT School terms at the North Canberra Baptist Church Hall. Numbers were especially good in 2018-19; two sets or better (ie 16-20 people) achieved on many nights, resulting in a 20% increase in takings over the previous financial year. Free beginner/refresher classes were offered on request, encouraging new dancers to become regular attendees. Most of those who did so also joined MFS (if not already members), so that MFS members continue to make up 95% or better of those attending.

Ticket prices remained at the same level as the past three years (\$8 for MFS members and \$9 for non-MFS members). There continues to be a very good response to the option to advance purchase 10-class passes which reduces the ticket price per class to \$7 for MFS and \$8 for non-MFS members. The first two classes for new attendees are free.

Four end of term mini-ceilis were held. A deck-dance at a private home proved popular attracting 30+. These events add an extra social dimension that helps to retain numbers and attract other MFS members who may not be regular class attendees.

The pool of people willing to teach and/or call increased in 2018-19, creating variety in class programs and stimulating interest from newer attendees in taking on organising and calling roles.

ISD dancers were regulars at various festivals held throughout the year. ISD teachers and callers represented and promoted MFS by running workshops or calling at the National Folk Festival, Bundanoon DanceFest, Yass Irish & Celtic Music Festival, festivals at Kangaroo Valley, Majors Creek, Cobargo and Trentham, Melbourne Comhaltas annual dance weekend and Sydney Gaelic Club events.

Annual dance weekend

The 14th annual dance weekend held at the Hall Pavilion, Hall Village in October 2018, may have been the best yet with over 130 people attending from the ACT, NSW, Victoria, Qld, SA and Ireland. Maureen Culleton, Irish Set Dancing Master from County Laois was the invited teacher. Her expertise and gracious teaching style were inspirational; reinvigorating experienced dancers and captivating new dancers (translating into increased numbers at ISD weekly classes). The Jimmy Mullarkey Ceili Band (Sydney) provided fabulous music at three ceilis.

The Group now has an established relationship with the Embassy of Ireland, receiving sponsorship of \$1,000 in 2018. Embassy staff also attended the Saturday evening gala ceili. This relationship with the Embassy contributes to the ongoing success of the weekend both in terms of its profile and financial viability.

The financial objective of the weekend is to 'break-even'. A significant surplus was achieved; largely attributable to the high number of attendees attracted by a teacher from Ireland.

Administration and acknowledgements

Organisers for the financial year were David Arnold, Paul Wayper and Christine Briton (classes) and David and Trish Arnold, Paul Wayper, and Christine Briton (annual dance weekend).

The organisers wish to thank all of those who contributed in so many different ways during the year, including teachers, callers, those who set-up/pack-down/clean up, those who contribute to suppers and everyone who comes along to share the joy of Irish Set Dancing.

Christine Briton, ISD Group Coordinator
22 August 2019