



Celtic Club 2025 Committee Election

1st - 28th October 2025



Fergal Coleman



I am grateful to be endorsed by our Club's Board for election.

If elected, I will support Ronan McDonald as President, Lynda Meredith as Treasurer and Michael Cooney as Secretary.

We can be proud: Club membership is up 10 per cent in a year and The Wild Geese is the best Irish bistro in Melbourne.

We have stable assets, cash in the bank, are debt-free and pokies-free; we are fully audited and compliant

If elected I will work with members as part of a cooperative, positive, practical board. My career is in digital strategy and transformation. I help organisations deliver simple, connected customer experiences through smart platforms, data insights, and collaborative innovation.

I care deeply about making our Club more than just a pub – we can be the leading meeting place for the Irish in Australia.

A renewed board will deliver a great experience for members, prudent asset decisions and a clear path to a balanced return on venue operations. We celebrate the 40th anniversary of our first female members in 2026 – and our 140th anniversary in 2027.

Please vote like our Club's future depends on it.

John Kavanagh OAM



I, John Michael Kavanagh OAM (No.2), along with Bernard Dunn (No.13), seek your support for election to the Celtic Club Committee.

The Celtic Club is in urgent need of oversight. Long term decisions are being made under a veil of secrecy and loyal members are being completely blindsided.

This year saw annual subscriptions increase from \$30 to \$188.70 and the first members learned of this outrageous decision was when we received our renewals.

The sale of the Limerick Arms Hotel is another example of the current committee's total lack of transparency. It sees no need to consult members on major decisions that directly affect them. Every committee member must be held accountable for this inexcusable failing.

I was an Independent local Councillor for 16 years, Mayor twice, and have led committees of management across many sectors including local government, education and local waterways groups. As a fourteen-year chairperson of a local government Audit and Risk Committee, I am fully cognisant of the fiduciary responsibilities, something sadly lacking in the current committee.

My community endeavours are characterised by competence, transparency and commitment for which I received an OAM in 2023. If elected, I will bring these skills to the Celtic Club Committee.

Aoife Kealy



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My career is in urban infrastructure and commercial development. I lead complex public-private partnerships that shape vibrant, connected cities through transport, placemaking, and design.

I care deeply about the commercial sustainability of our club and protecting our assets – and as a keen runner about exercise, food, music and fun!

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Pat McGorry



I am grateful to be endorsed by our Club's Board for election.

If elected, I will support Ronan McDonald as President, Lynda Meredith as Treasurer, Michael Cooney as Secretary, and Fergal Coleman as Vice President and I would be more than happy to remain on the Board to assist with transition for the next phase. We can be proud: Club membership is up 10 per cent in a year and The Wild Geese is the best Irish bistro in Melbourne.

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My career in mental health has built cultures that enhance "mental wealth". The same applies to the healing and reinvention of the Celtic Club. This means a welcoming culture where people feel at home among friends.

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Seamus Bradley



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We can be proud of our Club. Membership is up 10 per cent in a year and we represent our diverse community – The Wild Geese is the best Irish bistro in Melbourne.

The Club has stable assets, cash in the bank, is debt-free, proudly pokies-free; we are fully audited and fully compliant.

If elected I will work with members as part of a cooperative, positive, practical board.

My career as an award-winning journalist and editor, mainly at The Age, and now as a media and communications consultant has seen me manage large teams and handle multiple crises.

I served on the RACV Community Foundation Board, Melbourne IVF Human Research Ethics Committee and the advisory board of Property Initiatives, Australia's first for-purpose real estate agency.

I MC the Club's business lunches.

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Ronan McDonald



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My career is in third-level education. I am a Professor at the University of Melbourne where I hold the only Chair of Irish Studies in Australia.

I care deeply about our Club as a beacon of Irish culture in Melbourne, a place for friendship, enjoyment, and community.

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Mary Healy



I am Mary Nanette Healy (nee O'Keefe) and am committed to studying and promoting our Irish culture because the Irish contribution to Australian culture must be told to all citizens. We as club members must be more informed within the club through the said old-fashioned paper trail which is easier for all to read keep up with and refer to as an information source for Celtic Club news and events. As a committee member I will attend to this matter as many members miss receiving emails.

I hope to preserve the Celtic Club as my great-grandfather J. J Fitzgerald was a founding committee man, I have come to learn of my ancestors' achievements when I researched:-

Railways and Pastures: The Australian O' Keefes

which was credited as a resource book for Australian Studies in the fields of agriculture and transport.

In my second book I studied William Heffernan's life in Ireland, America, Victoria and New Zealand in which I described his achievements in "Heffernan of the Shamrock".

He promoted music and theatre on the Sandhurst (Bendigo) goldfield.

I will endeavor to connect all members using traditional means. and bring members together by posting circulars.

Genevieve McNamara



Hello

My name is Genevieve McNamara. I have been a member of the Celtic Club for over 25 years. I have always been proud of my Irish heritage and enjoy participating in cultural and social events. The Celtic Club has always been a forum for many of these events and caters to the varied interests of members and friends. I would like this focus to continue.

I am a retired nurse. My last employment was at the Australian Red Cross Blood Service (now Lifeblood) where I worked for 19 years. I managed the Mobile Units that go out and set up temporary blood collection sites in metropolitan Melbourne. It was a busy job! It involved a lot of logistics and financial management skills. Working in a heavily regulated industry gave me excellent compliance and governance skills.

If I were to be elected to the Board/Committee I would be there for the members and be a champion for cultural and social enterprises. I believe the members need a voice to ensure the principles of the Celtic Club continue and are maintained.

Marita Dunbar



My platform is transparency, compliance and accountability.

1. The Celtic Club has less than 600 members. The 2021 Census states Victoria has approximately 625,000 people with Irish heritage. What has the Board done to embrace and support our Irish community and therefore expand our membership? Our Club is not sustainable and not truly representative of our Irish community with so few members.
2. The Board rewrote much of our Rules. Rule 80 has now been removed. It stated the Board was not permitted to exchange or sell property without the sanction of 75% of members at a General Meeting. The Board can now sell our property without our consent. Why did the Board remove this requirement?
3. Our membership fees have been increased dramatically without consultation with members. To maintain our membership, we have been forced to have a "tab" and provide our credit card details. Any unspent money will be taken by the Club at the end of the year and we have to pay anew the following year. If your "tab" falls under \$30 money will be automatically deducted from your credit card. We did not agree to this.

For information concerning my qualifications and experience please see my LinkedIn account.

Jennifer Smith



My name is Jennifer Smith and I have been a member of the Celtic Club for many years and served on the Committee several years ago. I am qualified as an accountant (Bachelor of Business (Accounting) and teacher (Grad. Dip.Ed (secondary) work in the finance and superannuation sector. I am a mother of three boys and a grandmother of one, soon to be two. If elected, I hope to expand the Club and ensure financial stability and sound governance. In achieving this, I can work well in teams and share my finance knowledge and skills. I want the Club to grow as a cultural organisation, celebrating and promoting our culture and heritage and extending our reach into the broader local and regional community. I have experience on several Committees including cultural clubs and community organisations. I have developed a sound knowledge of the regulatory frameworks that guide Incorporated Associations. The Celtic Club needs to expand its membership, strengthen financial controls and ensure sound governance to strengthen its' cultural links.

Lynda Meredith



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My career is in client service leadership and strategic growth. I drive operational excellence, customer-centric innovation, and scalable solutions across global outsourcing environments.

I care deeply about nurturing Melbourne's Irish community – and I've worked with our dance groups for many years.

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James Dunne



Independent Candidate for the Celtic Club Committee

About Me

Dublin born & educated. Former President, Irish Australian Society. Senior executive experience leading major international companies. CEO – Christian Dior (Aust/NZ, Spith Pacific). GM – L'Oreal. GM- Estee Lauder Head of Marketing – Ego Pharmaceuticals.

My Priorities

- Transparency & Governance

Who owns the Celtic Club? Why was the Celtic Club Hotels Pty Ltd created with only two directors? Why was the Limerick Arms sale kept secret? I will hold quarterly member updates to keep you informed.

- Financial Responsibility

Assets have dropped from \$21 million to \$15 million in just four years. Limerick Arms is a major liability – it must be sold quickly. The current model is unsustainable.

- Membership Renewal

Current process is a fiasco. Membership is down 35% already and could fall by 50% by EOFY. I will return to a simple proven system.

- Committee Restored

Heritage, Audit and Membership Committees have been abandoned. I will re-establish them immediately.

My Commitment

The Current committee are strong professionals, but may not have the collective skills to run a member-based organisation. I bring proven leadership, governance, and organisational experience to secure the future of the Celtic Club.

Your Vote Counts

- Vote James Dunne – Independent Candidate

Bernard Dunn



My name is Bernard Dunn (No 13) and I will aiming to secure a place on the committee and working towards creating a club where the members are the No 1 priority in all decision making.

My desire to be more involved at the CC is also driven by the disappointment that I and many fellow members feel about the last two terms under the current leadership. While we recognise the time and effort that they have put in, their promise of greater transparency and accountability has not been apparent in their dealings.

The recent rule changes under this leadership would appear to be disenfranchising the members rather than encouraging more participation.

I will be advocating for greater involvement from members in all aspects of the club particularly in matters that affect them directly, like the rule changes, fee increases and lack of access to the membership list.

I would ask you to support my colleague in John Kavanagh AOM & Bernard Dunn, by voting 2 & 13, and our preferred order after that is 17, 8, 9, 10, 12 & 7.

Please see our website **building a better Celtic club.com** which will be available very soon.

Michael Cooney



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My career is in Government and the law. I have advised Labor leaders and Prime Ministers and now I lead public affairs at Maurice Blackburn Lawyers.

I care deeply about mateship and the fair go and I want our Club to be somewhere everyone feels welcome and everyone can have fun.

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Nial Finegan



Soon after arriving in Australia in 2003, I joined the Celtic Club to connect with like-minded people and remain close to our Irish and Celtic heritage. The friendships and sense of community I found here have been invaluable, and I remain committed to ensuring the Club continues to be a welcoming and vibrant home for all members. To echo my mother's favourite phrase: *'Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin!'*

As President, I led the membership in the decision to sell Queen Street with the clear aim of securing the Club's future. At that time, I said the Club was more than bricks and mortar — it's about the people. After some challenging years, we are now homed in a great facility, with a strong commercial arm to underpin financial sustainability. This achievement is a credit to the current board, management, and our members.

But there is more to do. We must continue strengthening our governance, expanding our membership, and ensuring the Club delivers real value and meaningful connection for all. If elected, I will bring a commitment to transparency, accountability, and collaboration, helping the Celtic Club not only survive but thrive as a proud, enduring celebration of our Irish traditions.

Celia Fowler



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My career is in leading funding strategy and grant program development within the not-for-profit sector, focussing on addressing food waste, food insecurity, and community education.

I care deeply about sustainability and waste reduction, protection of natural resources, and building resilient communities. In my spare time, I love live music and painting.

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Helene McNamara



I am a veteran member of the Celtic Club and have prior experience as a Committee Member and Vice President.

Many of you will remember my late husband Jim Cusack (Committee Member / Secretary and radio broadcaster (James Connolly Association) on 3CR. We both formed a strong belief in the value of member-led community organisations working to a Constitution (Rules) that safeguarded the interests of the Club and its members.

My professional career in the community services sector provided me with diverse skills and knowledge of the legislation, regulations, compliance and standards required in delivering services to the most vulnerable members of our community. Prior Board/Committee experience includes a community legal service (10 years as Chair), and other community Incorporated Associations.

Formal Qualifications

- Melbourne University (B.A./Dip.Crim.)
- Cert IV - teaching at TAFE

My focus, if elected:

- flexible membership and fee options to reflect the varying needs of our Irish Community
- better access for our senior members, supports for young people, newly arrived
- improved communication between Committee, members, and community groups.
- improved transparency regarding financial management and governance

I hope we all can strengthen our Club for generations to come

Isla Sutherland



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My career is in content and communications for global architecture studio Woods Bagot, with expertise crafting compelling narratives for brand visibility and audience engagement.

I care deeply about facilitating community engagement and driving critical discourse through cultural events, adapting Celtic traditions for contemporary audiences.

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