

CELTIC COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA ("CCA")

NOTES AND EXPLANATIONS

OF THE PROPOSED GUIDELINES FOR HONOURS

1. These notes and comments refer to the Guidelines proposed to be approved at the AGM of the CCA in 2009.
2. The guidelines are drafted making reference to contributions to the objects of the CCA rather than the efforts made. Experience suggests that occasionally there are some supporters of celtic causes or the objects of the CCA who make a lot of effort but who are not necessarily uniformly successful in the level of their contributions. For example, leadership may be an important contribution which has to be assessed in the level of the award. The initiation of new events or new activities may be an important contribution calling for recognition, although that contribution may not directly involve any great personal effort. The focus of both the awards and of the constitution of the CCA itself is on the objects of the CCA.
3. Every celtic organisation or organising committee of any celtic event requires workers. Those workers may be a president, chairman, secretary, treasurer and organisers. Carrying out any of the existing celtic events of each of the celtic communities required the devoted service of a large number of people. Initiating or starting new events or new initiatives similarly requires workers. A primary purpose of the honours system is to recognise those contributions at an appropriate level.
4. A written nomination has been found especially desirable so that there is a proper record of what has caused the CCA to make the award and to assist in determining the level of the award. This is particularly so where the members of the general committee may not have personal knowledge of the work and contributions made by a particular candidate for honour.

5. It is suggested that the formal documents should not be so detailed as to present obstruction to the process. Also, it is desirable that the information to be required should not be specified in stone because experience will suggest from time to time that the information required will vary from period to period. However, a sample of a proposed nomination which it would seem might be suitable under these guidelines and which the secretary and the CCA general committee could approve without listing it in the Guidelines, should include:
- (a) Full name, residential or normal address, occupation and contact details such as telephone number and email.
 - (b) Date of birth – can be useful in assessing the availability of the candidate for continuing years of service and may indicate the length of service that has already been contributed. However, if found that the date of birth presents a problem, that could be omitted.
 - (c) Place of birth.
 - (d) Descent or heritage in one of the celtic communities, not essential, but it may be useful or convenient to know.
 - (e) A description of the contributions that the candidate has made to the objects of the CCA which should be sufficient to give an indication of the importance and significance of that contribution.
 - (f) Has the contribution been made by way of cultural activities (eg music or song or performances, or dancing or recitations), or by administrative work (eg by running organisations or being an office bearer of a celtic organisation), or being a contributor of labour and work (eg putting up tents, distributing information, assisting in the running of events).
 - (g) The period during which those services or contributions were made.
 - (h) Names and phone numbers or addresses of other persons from whom further information or a reference may be obtained.

- (i) Any financial contributions which the candidate has made can be considered.
6. The assessment of financial contributions is a difficult issue. On the one hand, the CCA would not want to appear to be selling honours. On the other hand, financial contributions at various stages of the history of the CCA may be of great importance. A few examples:
- (a) The contribution by Lady Mary Fairfax of her very substantial donation of approximately \$1,000,000 to the establishment of the Fairfax Chair of Celtic Studies at Sydney University was a single contribution at one point in time but which by itself achieved one of the long-term objects of the CCA. The award at the highest level of the CCA honour system was generally agreed to have been outstandingly obviously appropriate.
 - (b) On the other hand, in 1983, 26 years ago, it seemed that there was very little possibility of establishing any courses at Sydney University or any other university which would begin some academic study of celtic studies, which was an important object of the CCA. A number of supporters and members made contributions of cash which funded the initial teaching, initially at a very low level but which led then to the academic recognition of the need of at least a start of the teaching of celtic languages, archaeology and history. For that initial seed capital, a number of donations of \$1,000 were made, which does not seem a large sum of money now but which was of great importance to get the teaching of celtic studies to begin somewhere. The CCA awarded a number of contributions of that financial kind at the level of Cyffail y Celtaidd (CyC).
7. It is strongly suggested that the CCA in these guidelines and in our draft, should leave the possibility that an honour may be granted appropriately which includes in whole or part a financial contribution. The importance of that financial contribution has to be assessed in determining what the level of the award should be.

8. The assessment of the degree must recognise the variety of contributions that may be made by the candidate's personal time and effort and involvement or commitment to matters of their celtic heritage. Voluntary work or the performance of specified jobs may be very important contributions – eg long service on organising committees. So also is the physical work of putting up tents, putting up notices and manning facilities. The award has to be a balance between the importance of the contribution made in the sense of what it achieves and the importance of the contribution made as recognising the effort or time taken.
9. One of the big problems raised in all of our discussions has been the degree of objectivity that we can achieve in the award system. There is general agreement, and these proposed guidelines include a preference to be as objective as possible but experience has shown that whatever we do, there is always going to be some degree of subjectivity as to what the impression of the committee is as to the value of the contributions and the level of recognition that is appropriate for those contributions. Often it has been noted that in the course of discussions as to what honour is appropriate, we have frequently compared the honour that has been awarded for one candidate as a standard in determining whether that is more or less or the same as the candidate being considered. That necessarily means that the members of the committee are making their own personal attitudes manifest. But the guidelines urge the committee to be as objective as they reasonably can be.
10. Experience has shown that very important contributions may be made by performers or organisers of celtic events who do not have by descent or ancestry, celtic ethnicity. The guidelines maintain that position. Similarly, an organisation may by reason of friendship or personal support make contributions to the objects of the CCA, although the organisation is not of itself celtic in nature (eg making special arrangements or donations for equipment) or use of equipment (eg music equipment or amplification for celtic events). Painting has been a frequent example of businesses which have made a significant contribution. However, it seems that most organisations that are not themselves celtic in their

origin or purpose, may not value the honour as much as an honour granted to a manifestly celtic organisation.

11. The guidelines suggest that there should be some formal decision made about an award, and it is suggested that the clear way of doing it is to have the CCA general committee pass a resolution which can be put into a minute and recorded in the minute book.
12. Experience in the CCA meetings discussing awards have not included many examples of a decision to increase an award after further time or further contributions after the original award is made. The guidelines specifically allow for "promotion" by a contributory who has made further significant contributions after the original award that has already recognised the previous contributions made.
13. There has been some discussion that in addition to an honour for contributions made, the general committee may resolve to grant a certificate of the contributions made even though no honour is granted. This is easily included in the guidelines without having to have any formal document or set out in the guidelines what the certificate should be in form or appearance. Whether it should be by way of some document that could be framed or retained as a memorial record, as a scroll or some other long-term document should be simply a matter for the committee to resolve as to whether the committee wants to go to the expense of some permanent form of paper or some handsome or hand painted document.
14. The guidelines allow for the possibility that by reason of special circumstances, all formalities as to nomination and written information can be waived – eg as has already happened, a long-term contributor in a very serious health position having a very small opportunity to receive his Honour because of the possibility of an early death. All guidelines have to allow for special circumstances such as that.
15. Questions as to the finalisation of the draft of the guidelines has been considered by the general committee of the CCA on a number of occasions. The first resolution for the appointment of a committee to work on these guidelines was

resolved on 26 March 2007 and further developed by the appointment of a review committee on 25 February 2008. A great deal of discussion has occurred at quite a number of meetings of the general committee. This present draft prepared by Gordon Connan and Malcolm Broun is an effort to set out the basic principles that have generally speaking been agreed in these guidelines. It is hoped that this draft is sufficiently flexible to avoid great further discussions. Flexibility seems to be essential.

16. The level of the award has to be decided by the CCA on a case by case basis. The test we have sometimes used is whether the contributions can be described as for the first time “a job well done”. The highest award has been suggested as equivalent to a knighthood. Two recipients of our highest award illustrate the standard – Lady Mary Fairfax’s formation of the long hoped for Chair of Celtic Studies; and the late Peter Alexander CMG our founder and imitator is another.
17. The second level award “DUINE URRAMACH” is a form of address used for a celtic chief – eg a present Scottish Chief (usually rendered in English as “the much honoured ...”). The honour suggests a respect worthy of the respect of a chief.
18. As to the male or female forms, at least as to Scots Gaelic – Duine – to be used as “a man” or “a person”, as occurs in many languages.