

# RESCUE RESEARCH BUOYED UP BY LIFESAVING EXPERTS

Issues such as non-swimmers wearing lifejackets, child safety in water sports and RNLI saving lives through research and marketing campaigns were high on the agenda at this year's Lifesaving Foundation's Drowning Prevention and Rescue Research Conference in September. Report by John Connolly, Hon. Chief Executive of the Lifesaving Foundation.

**T**his year's Lifesaving Foundation Conference (10-13 September) included 30 presentations, equal time allocated for discussion after all presentations, while our chairperson Brendan Donohoe explained that the charity's policy is to promote discussion among experts across a variety of drowning and water safety-related disciplines.

An International Drowning Researcher Alliance (IDRA) was first discussed four years ago at our sixth conference in 2014 and by the end of that conference the concept had become a plan. Many research partnerships have been formed since then at Foundation conferences with the subsequent publication of a number of presentations.

Among research questions considered at this year's Lifesaving Foundation conference in Maynooth (10-13 September) were 'Should the wearing of lifejackets in open water by non-swimmers be promoted' (Elizabeth Bennett,

University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital, USA), 'Parents' false perceptions of their children's safety in open water activities' (Dr. Shayne Baker OAM, Royal Life Saving Australia), 'Can we predict how a person will respond to the cold shock response?' (Dr Martin Barwood PhD, Leeds Trinity University, UK), 'The concept of water competence' (Prof Stephen Langendorfer PhD, Editor, International Journal of Aquatic Research and Education, USA), and 'Is there a crisis in the aquatic profession?' (Prof Robert Stallman, Tanzania and Norway).

Information topics included 'Bringing home the bodies of those who drown abroad' (Colin Bell, Founder of the Kevin Bell Repatriation Trust, Northern Ireland); 'A Mother's Story – Founding the Charity River and Sea Sense' (Debbie Turnbull, mother of drowned 15-year-old Christopher Turnbull, UK); and 'Respect the Water Campaign – How research and marketing



Pictured at the opening of this year's Lifesaving Foundation conference on 10 September in Maynooth's Glenroyal Hotel:  
**Front Row (l-r):** Tosh Lavery (retired former Sergeant-in-Charge of the Garda Water Unit and author of the autobiography 'Tosh'), Assistant Commissioner David Sheahan (senior officer with responsibility for the Garda Water Unit representing the Garda Commissioner), Marie Roche (GSRMA Executive Member), John Connolly (Hon. Chief Executive of the Lifesaving Foundation), Garda David Hearne (multiple swimming rescuer and former member of the Garda Water Unit), Brendan Donohoe (Chair of Lifesaving Foundation).  
**Back Row (l-r):** Garda Jason Hannon (Garda Water Unit), Dr Shayne Baker OAM (Past-President Baker OAM (Royal Life Saving Australia), Garda Chris Hayes (Garda Water Unit), Detective Senior Constable Paul Reynolds (Australian Police Force), Chief Supt (Retired) John Long (Lifesaving Foundation and former Secretary General of RLSS Commonwealth), Insp. Rory Hoy (PSNI), Dr Patrick Buck PhD (Lifesaving Foundation and Remote EMT).



**Seated (l-r):** John Connolly (Hon. Chief Executive of the Lifesaving Foundation), Eugene Clonan (Deputy Director, Irish Coast Guard), Ceann Comhairle Seán O'Fearghail, Third Officer Paul O'Reilly (Dublin Fire Brigade), and Marie Roche (Garda Síochána Retired Members' Association)  
**Standing (l-r):** Frank Flood (Wexford Marine Watch), The Hon. Richard Andrews (Australian Ambassador to Ireland), Brendan Donohoe (Chairperson of The Lifesaving Foundation), Dr Shayne Baker OAM Baker OAM (Royal Life Saving Australia), Donal Hackett (RNLi), Ross Macleod (RNLi), and Cllr George Lawlor MCC (Chairperson of Wexford Marine Watch).



A special award was presented by Dáil Ceann Comhairle Seán O'Fearghail to Mary Morrin and Helen Irwin Savary; Mary rescued her sister Helen from drowning 50 years ago, and she commented that she still has nightmares about the drowning event.



**Pictured at the presentation of the 2017 Ireland Medal to Australian Lifesaver Dr Shayne Baker:**  
**Seated (l-r):** Diane Baker, Seán O'Fearghail and Dr Shayne Baker;  
**Standing (l-r):** Brendan Donohoe (Chair, Lifesaving Foundation), Richard Andrews (Australian Ambassador), Elaine Edwards (Blizzard Survival) and John Connolly (Hon. Chief Executive, Lifesaving Foundation).



Ross Macleod (RNLi Strategic Marketing Manager, UK), Dr Shayne Baker OAM (Royal Life Saving Australia), Prof Kristine De Martelaer PhD (University of Utrecht, Belgium)

Speakers included Assistant Chief Constable Paul Anderson from Scotland, Inspector Rory Hoy from the Police Service Northern Ireland (PSNI), Australian Police Detective Constable Paul Reynolds and Garda Dave Hearne (multiple drowning rescuer and former member of the Garda Water Unit). The project is supported by Garda HQ and the Garda Síochána Retired Members' Association (GSRMA).

As part of the Lifesaving Foundation/Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) research partnership launched in recent months, Prof John Wells, WIT's Head of the School of Health Sciences, presented the preliminary outcomes of a project, involving retired Gardaí and community rescue groups. The project investigated how drowning deaths have an impact within the local communities.

Among those who actively participated in this year's conference was retired Garda Sergeant Tosh Lavery, author of the autobiography 'Tosh'; as a member of the Garda Water Unit he was involved in the recovery of over 200 drowned bodies.

**IRELAND MEDAL CEREMONY**

Dáil Ceann Comhairle Seán O'Fearghail presented the 2017 Ireland Medal to Australian lifesaver Dr Shayne Baker in recognition of his long exceptional contribution to saving lives from drowning. Dr Baker, whose maternal ancestors came from County Clare, has over 30 years' service as a lifeguard and trainer/educator in the Asia Pacific Region.

During the Ireland Medal award ceremony recognition was also given to Colin MacDonald OBE, Chairperson of the Royal Lesotho Lifesaving Association, and Wexford Marine Watch.

helps RNLi save lives' (Ross Macleod, RNLi Strategic Marketing Manager, UK).

In a special presentation, supported by the Surgeon Admiral Frank Golden Research Fund, Ireland's leading extreme and marathon open water swimmer Nuala Moore, discussed 'Why understanding the challenges of extreme swimming is as important as training for the distance'.

**DROWNING PREVENTION RESEARCH**

The late Garda Commissioner Eamonn Doherty, who had a long association with drowning prevention, is best known for his 'Doherty Commission Report' that led to the establishment of the Irish Coast Guard Air Sea Rescue Service. In his memory a special long-term project has been set up to research police involvement in drowning prevention and rescue worldwide.

In a special conference session, chaired by Garda Assistant Commissioner David Sheahan, four police officers outlined their own drowning experiences and explained how drowning deaths are investigated by their own forces.

**DROWNING SPECIALIST LIBRARY COLLECTION AT WATERFORD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**

***One aspect of its partnership with Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) is the Lifesaving Foundation's Collection, in a bid to build a large drowning specialist library within WIT's Luke Wadding Library.***

*The Lifesaving Foundation Collection is currently available to any interested parties through an inter-library loan system, and according to John Connolly, Hon. Chief Executive of the Foundation, the number of books is set to grow into the thousands. "The collection will also have water safety leaflets, posters and brochures available for download," he added.*

*The collection has been integrated into the extensive library collection and organised by Dewey's Decimal Classification order. A critical mass of materials is linked on the library catalogue <http://witcat.wit.ie> by 'The Lifesaving Foundation Collection' series link. A small number of items are reference items, which can only be accessed by visiting WIT's Luke Wadding Library.*

*Prof John Wells, WIT's Head of the School of Health Sciences, is the primary contact for external researchers interested in viewing the collection. Researchers will be facilitated with temporary access cards and subject to agreement allowed to borrow items from the collection. Inter Library Loan will be an option where possible.*

*For further information visit <http://wit-ie.libguides.com/> and click on 'The Lifesaving Foundation Collection'.*



**Pictured at the recent presentation of a large number of books on drowning statistics and research by the Lifesaving Foundation to WIT's Luke Wadding Library were (l-r): Chief Supt John Long (Retired), International Director of the Lifesaving Foundation; Brendan Donohue, Foundation Chairman; Prof Joost Bierens (Editor of 'The Handbook on Drowning' from The Netherlands), Prof Willie Donnelly, WIT President; John Connolly, Foundation's Hon. Chief Executive; Kieran Cronin, WIT Librarian, and Dr Stathis Avramidis (The Hellenic Centre for Disease Control in Athens).**



**Kieran Cronin is Deputy Librarian, with responsibility for archives and special collections, at WIT's Luke Wadding Library. He has worked at WIT Libraries since April 2007, where he is responsible for the development of existing and new library services and resources for students, staff and the local community.**