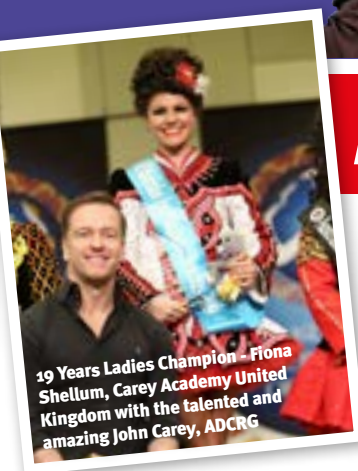




# Dancing Down Under with Niamh Champion

## NEW International Competition

Taking things to the next level, the Australian International Oireachtas kicked off in May to rave reviews. Over 600 competitors from Australia, New Zealand, USA, Canada and the UK entered the three-day inaugural event, which took place at the Royal Pines Resort, Gold Coast Queensland.



**W**ith a fine spread of international adjudicators including Tim O'Hare, USA; James McCutcheon, Scotland; Isabella Fogarty, Ireland; Richard Griffin, London; Monica Poulton, Australia; and Vicki Paulin, Australia – the Championships had the necessary ingredients of a grand-slam event for the global Irish dancing circuit.

But according to former World Champion, and *Heartbeat of Home* superstar Olivia Griffin - who took out the top-spot in the Senior Ladies 20–22 years – it was the outstanding friendliness from the organisers of the event and the unique 'Contemporary Freestyle Dance' section that elevated this Oireachtas to stand-

out levels. "I loved the event and I really enjoyed not only the competition, but the Gold Coast as well – Australia is beautiful! And it was so unique with the Freestyle section which everyone loved – it was so entertaining," she says.

The Freestyle event is a unique section designed for schools to enter a group performance of up to 10 dancers to perform without restriction or rules regarding the use of competition steps. This enables schools to creatively entertain adjudicators and audiences with a fusion of high-end performance techniques and Irish in an original collaboration. Queensland's Watkins Academy was



successful in keeping the crown within their state for 2014.

Other international stars nabbing top spots included 19 Years Ladies Champion Fiona Shellum of the UK's Carey Academy, and 8 Years Sub-Minor Boy Champion Jonathan Shirley of Cleary from the USA's Western Region. But home-grown dancing down under talent Liam McWeeney, 10, from

Walton NSW took out the top spot in the Minor Boys 10 Years and says it has to be his favourite competition so far. "I never expected to win, so it was all very exciting," says young Liam. "But I was really proud to because it was a big event, and I also got to make new friends from Australia and overseas too – I am definitely going to go to again next year!"

# DANCING DOWN UNDER ❄

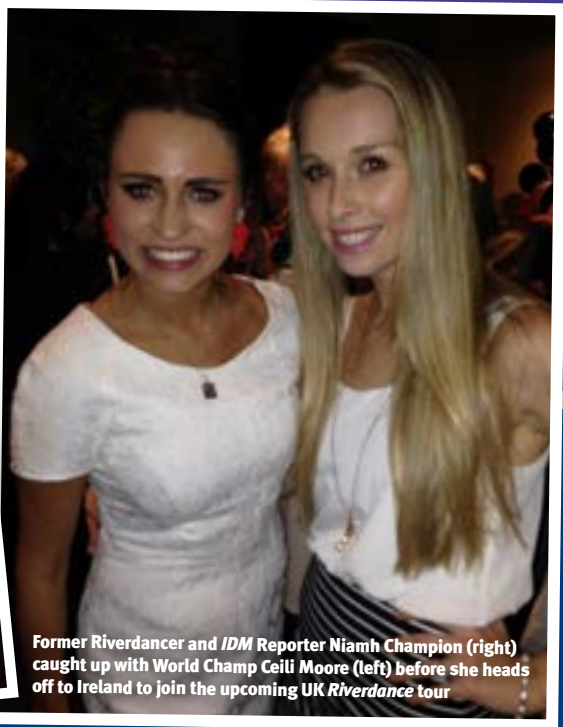
## Debuts

Beautiful trophies and prizes were awarded



Liam McWeeney,  
Minor Boy's 10 Years

Another unique aspect of the event popular among parents and dancers was the traditional set-dance round for competitors who did not recall in the Solo Championship sections. The winners of this round were awarded a prize, while all other entrants received



Former Riverdancer and *IDM* Reporter Niamh Champion (right) caught up with World Champ Ceili Moore (left) before she heads off to Ireland to join the upcoming UK *Riverdance* tour

## World Champ Ceili Moore Celebrates!

Stepping out in true champion-fashion, Ceili Moore celebrated her World Championship win in her hometown of Sydney, New South Wales this month. Ceili popped champagne with 175 family and friends from across Australia, including Fiona-Gaye Moore Academy dancers, and fellow Aussie dancers from *Heartbeat of Home* and *Footstorm*, to celebrate winning the Ladies 19–20 division at the 2014 London World Irish Dancing Championships.

Ceili is one of only three female Australian Irish dancers to ever win a solo World Championship title. Ceili's mother, Fiona-Gaye Moore, was actually Australia's first World Champion! The duo are said to be only the second ever mother-daughter pairing to win a World title, making the evening's celebration uniquely special.

Wowing the crowd with her World Championship winning *Downfall of Paris* and Reel, Ceili was later joined by her mother Fiona in a step-about, to the delight of all the guests. Ceili will enjoy just a few short few weeks at home with her family after returning from touring with *Heartbeat of Home* and *Footstorm* before embarking on another new adventure with *Riverdance* in the UK.

- a participation medallion ensuring no
- dancers went home empty-handed
- from the international event. Written in
- a thank-you card to event organisers,
- adjudicator James McCutcheon stated:
- "These champs were definitely the
- friendly and welcoming Championships".
- Next year's event takes place at
- the Royal Pines Resort on the Gold
- Coast in Queensland, 22 May – 24
- May with organisers anticipating
- uplift in international entries as
- the Championship establishes
- itself as a must-do Oireachtas. See
- online for details on 2015 entry.
- [www.aidainc.com/oireachtas](http://www.aidainc.com/oireachtas)