Abstract
From the 1870s to the late 1950s, Irish handball was the preeminent sporting pastime of Irish-Australian school boys attending Christian Brothers' schools across Australia. Led and encouraged by religious and backed by the wider Irish-Australian community, handball participation formed a crucial part of the ordinary lives of the Brothers and their students.

Despite the vast competitive networks of Irish handball, played within and between Christian Brothers' schools, the sport has been largely neglected by Irish-Australian scholarship, save for Patrick O'Farrell's brief characterisation of the sport as 'the informal playground sport of Catholic private schools, at least in New South Wales'.

O'Farrell's view was wrong in analysis and scope but indicative of standard Irish-Australian historiography; fixated on narratives of nationalism, Catholic hierarchy, and elitist politics.

My presentation would outline the experience of the Irish Christian Brothers in early twentieth-century Australia and the playing of Irish handball in their colleges.

This new research is acutely relevant for understanding Irish-Australian identity and the complex relationship of Catholicism, education, and sport; which has been the subject of scholarship in other parts of the Irish diaspora such as Argentina, Canada, and the United States.

Irish handball facilitated the dislocation and transformation of migrant identity, beyond O'Farrell's notion of Irish integration as an imperative of 'Australianise or perish'. It therefore highlights the complexity of Irish experience of diaspora; the attendant conflict of multiple and often contradictory cultural and transnational identities, and where and how Irish migrants over the last century situated that identity and communal experience.

My research offers areas for development in Irish-Australian historiography and lends itself to a fundamental reconsideration of our perceptions of Irish