



UACHTARÁN NA hÉIREANN
PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

MESSAGE FROM MICHAEL D. HIGGINS, PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

It is an honour to send warm greetings on the occasion of the 23rd Australasian Irish Studies Conference being held for the first time at the University of Sydney. I am aware of the array of alumni and distinguished scholars that constitute the university academic faculty and student body of the University and indeed of the other institutions from which your participants hail and who will contribute so richly to your deliberations.

I am delighted by the theme you have chosen for this year's Conference '*Myth and Memory*' – two issues on which I have often reflected and sought to fashion my own coherent narrative. I believe that these concepts are so central not only to the self-realisation of Irish and Celtic identity in Insular Europe but equally so to the Irish and Celtic communities that form our global diaspora not least so in Australia and New Zealand. I have no doubt that your deliberations will ignite stimulating discussion and debate on indigenous Australian interpretations and expressions of 'Myth and Memory' as well particularly in light of the brutality of the colonization process inflicted on them by Europeans including those of Irish origin. In humility and admiration, I recall that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island oral elaborations of 'Myths and Memory' predate ours by some 60,000 years.

I am confident your programme will stimulate much reflection on the depth, the heterogeneity and the complexity of the Irish contribution to the making and shaping of Australia and on the challenges of the appropriateness in remembering and reconstructing that history.

Conferences such as yours, together with Universities, play a vital role, now more than ever, in promoting cross-cultural understanding and engagement which help bring us all to a deeper and fuller understanding of our role in history and how past and current actions as well as those of our antecedents have impacted in both positive and negative ways the formation of the society in which we currently reside.

With best personal wishes for a most successful 23rd Australasian Irish Studies Conference.

Guím gach rath ar an obair thábhachtach ar siúl agaibh d'fhonn an Léann Éireannach a chur chun cinn thall.

Michael D. Higgins
Uachtarán na hÉireann
President of Ireland

13 November, 2018