Thanks to the Celtic Club and Chairman, Val Noon for special invitation to say a few words today in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Irish Easter Rising- an amazing story that was acted out on Irish soil and etched firmly into the Irish soul and memory forever.

Reflecting on the Rising and comparative events that were happening in Indigenous Australia from a Yorta Yorta context, is good starting point.

At the time of the rising in 1916 both my parents were aged 3 being born in 1913. They were living on a Government Reserve on the Murray River called Cummeragunja under the Governments brutal segregation and control policies that were shaped and refined from their application in other former British Colonies. As I’ve found in my research into the connection between Indigenous Australia and Ireland, the formula of Segregation and Control was well down pat before it reached Australia in the 18th Century. It was the story of the experience of my parents generation and their struggle against the Settler Colonial project of domination and control that took me on a journey of enquiry that eventually lead me to Ireland in 2006. Indeed it was an obsession to get to bottom of this abominable system that our people were forced to live under regulated by every measure of control possible to human freedom and existence.

This was a journey of learning of profound significance that is still a work in progress. It is about our comparative history of British Colonial policy and practice in 16th Century Ireland under the Act of Settlement and 18th century Australia under the infamous Aborigines Protection laws that drove the policy of segregation and control.

It was Ten years ago, on Easter 2006, that, we were on our first visit to Dublin. We found ourselves totally absorbed by a huge crowd in O’Connell Street, a crowd that filled the whole view right down to the Liffey. Soon enough we learned that this was the 90th anniversary of the Easter Uprising, and that the Republic was now alive and well. We weaved our way as close as we could to the stage in front of the famous Post Office to hear the dignitaries’ speeches including the President Mary Robinson. The bands played, the army marched, the horses paraded, and overhead the air force showed off the power of the republic, and the people cheered and sang.
Today in our Melbourne kitchen a memento of that visit takes pride of place. A poster of the 1916 Proclamation of the Irish Republic is fitting to end with. It echoes similar words that continue to be asserted by my people on fundamental questions of sovereignty, ownership, treaty constitutional inclusion, land rights and most importantly freedom and independence from Government domination and control. Here are just a few words of the Irish Freedom Fighters of 1916

Irishmen and Irishwomen. In the name of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us ... strikes for her freedom.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to ownership of Ireland.

That was our introduction to Dublin and to the long struggle for Irish freedom. Thank You for listening.

Dr Wayne Atkinson- Yorta Yorta Elder and Husband of Catherine Guinness gg Granddaughter of Arthur Guinness, Dublin, Ireland.