

'Her family hoped she'd come home'

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told the Irish Daily Mail last night that the young woman is believed to have given birth in her accommodation in the Kimberley Hotel in the remote town of Halls Creek, where she also worked in the bar.

An Irishman working and living in Halls Creek said the incident happened in May, and the woman's concerned family had hoped she would return home to Ireland.

'It's three or four months ago since it happened,' the local motel owner said. 'I do know that the family were trying to bring her home, but I don't know where she is now. She has left Halls Creek.'

On May 23 the woman was charged with 'concealing the birth of a child that died before or after birth', according to Western Australian police. Her case was referred to the court in Perth by the local Kununurra court.

Linda Black, Western Australia's Criminal Lawyers Association president, told ABC News: 'It's a charge that seems to be fairly rarely used.'

'I can't recall the last time I heard of anyone being charged with this.'

The Irishman in Halls Creek told the Mail that he knew the woman as it is a very small town with just seven or eight Irish people.

'She was working in the Kimberley Motel bar, she worked in the pub and as far as I know it was there that the incident happened. She was over working on a holiday visa, as a lot of people do; gardening, working in motels, bar work, cleaning work.'

The Western Australia Major Crime Squad was immediately called in to investigate the infant's death and they charged the Irishwoman. She

'It's a charge that's rarely used'

could now face a maximum penalty of two years in jail and, despite her parents' previous hopes, it has been reported that she remains in Perth while the case continues.

The woman is believed to have been on the second year of her working and travelling visa when she fell pregnant, but was not aware she was expecting a child. A crisis pregnancy charity said her situation was tragic, yet not uncommon.

Dr Shirley McQuade, medical director of the Dublin Well Woman Centre, sympathised and said: 'I know that there are often psychiatric issues behind these cases, and I'm sure the Australian authorities will look into this and she will be assessed.'

'The possible trauma of finding herself pregnant or the giving birth itself could have caused psychiatric problems afterwards.'

Meanwhile, Ms Black said that most countries around the world had a law requiring births to be reported, no matter what the circumstances.

'It's a charge that's certainly not unique to Western Australia,' she said. 'Without wanting to trivialise it, we just can't have people storing dead bodies all over the place without it being brought to the attention of the authorities and dealt with in a proper and formal way, so I think there's a strong public policy behind it.'

Ms Black said police always had some discretion over whether a criminal charge was appropriate.

'Police need to ask themselves two questions before they charge someone. First, is there a reasonable prospect of conviction, and second, is it in the public interest for us to charge them - and that requires them to weigh up a whole degree of factors.'

The law in Australia states: 'Any person who, when a woman is delivered of a child, endeavours, by any

LONELY PLACE 600km FROM ANYWHERE



Isolated: Halls Creek in Western Australia offers casual employment opportunities for travellers

HALLS Creek is a small town located in the East Kimberley region of Western Australia, more than 2,800km northeast of Perth.

The town functions as a major hub for the indigenous population and as a support centre for cattle stations in the area.

The remote location is popular for European backpackers, with the main work available for travellers including gardening, bar and restaurant work, cleaning, and labour roles with the numerous contractors in the area.

These jobs are provided via short-term working visas, meaning these backpackers move on from the Creek quite swiftly.

Halls Creek lies between the towns of Fitzroy Crossing and Turkey Creek, or Warmun on the Great Northern Highway. It is the only sizeable town found for at least 600km on the Highway. The Highway, with a length of almost

3,200 kilometres - more than five times the distance between Malin Head and Mizen Head - links Western Australia's capital city Perth with its northernmost port, Wyndham.

Locals explained to the Irish Daily Mail that while the town is remote, 'there is a lot of work and a lot of tourists'.

Something of a one-horse-town, there is one motel, one hotel and one caravan park in the area, with the town's main bar found in the Kimberley Hotel.

Halls Creek was once the hub of a gold rush in the late 1800s, but is now just a 'tiny speck on the map', according to the local newspaper editor.

'Halls Creek is a very small town,' said Halls Creek Herald editor Gerrard Willett. 'These businesses such as the hotels and motels, they're all in the town where there are very few people. We

have a highway which comes straight through the town called the great northern highway, and the town is just basically a stop on that. We're a little tiny town built on the side of a highway.'

Being at the centre of an aboriginal community, the town only has aboriginal churches. However, there is one Catholic church located relatively close in another town, Broome, where there is also a hospital which deals with pregnant women.

Although there is also an eight-bed ward hospital within the town, 'normally any woman with signs of heavy pregnancy, they are shipped seven hours south to the hospital in Broome', Mr Willett said.

According to KimberleyAustralia.com, the area was first surveyed in 1879 by Alexander Forrest, who reported on the excellent potential for cattle grazing.

THEY'RE NOT THE NORM, BUT IT HAPPENS



Insights: Dr McQuade

DR Shirley McQuade, medical director of the Dublin Well Woman Centre, said the case of the young Irish woman in Australia was not uncommon.

She said concealed pregnancies are usually the result of denial and the cause is often attributed to underlying psychiatric issues, or issues brought on by the trauma of the whole experience.

'I know that there are often psychiatric issues behind these cases, and I'm sure the Australian authorities will look into this and she will be assessed,' Dr McQuade said.

According to a case study published by the crisis pregnancy agency, concealed

secret disposition of the dead body of the child, to conceal its birth, whether the child died before, at, or after its birth, is guilty of a crime, and is liable to imprisonment for two years.'

However, some people in the community where the woman was hospitalised expressed surprise she had

been charged. One resident said: 'The experience of giving birth to a stillborn child in a foreign country must have been very traumatic, especially when it was unexpected.'

The Well Woman Centre confirmed that trauma is attached to such 'concealed pregnancies' when women are often in denial over their

symptoms leading to a huge shock when the time comes to deliver their newborns.

Sources have explained that the woman, from 'southern Ireland' remains unnamed, with concerns circulating over her well-being.

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reporter@dailymail.ie

Jellyfish alert as girl taken to hospital after sting

By Darren Hassett

A YOUNG girl has been treated in hospital after being stung by a jellyfish off a south coast beach.

The Irish Coast Guard said she had gone into anaphylactic shock and was given an antidote.

The incident happened on Thursday at Barleycove Beach in West Cork.

It could not be confirmed which species of jellyfish stung the girl

Meanwhile, swimmers have been urged to be extra careful after the venomous Lion's Mane jellyfish was spotted in Dublin Bay yesterday.

There were also anecdotal reports of the Portuguese Man O'War jellyfish spotted on Clonea and Bunmahon beaches in Co Waterford during the week.

John Leech of Irish Water Safety said: 'The Portuguese Man O'War jellyfish sting can cause anaphylactic shock and somebody who is sick is vulnerable.'

'The jellyfish has actually killed people. They are dangerous.'

Wind transports the jellyfish and they tend to travel in numbers and Mr Leech believes 'if there is a sighting, which is what we have, then there is likely to be more'.

Mr Leech believes it is important the public are aware of the dangers of these jellyfish.

Their purple and pink colour makes them attractive and approachable, especially for children.

Elsewhere, barrel jellyfish have been reported on beaches in Co Cork. While this jellyfish can sting, it is much more like a nettle sting.

Graham Johnston, a fisheries scientist for the Marine Institute, said: 'The Portuguese Man O'War is more of a warm water species, but they can come up this far.'

There are six or seven species of jellyfish around Ireland every year but not all of them would sting, according to Mr Johnston.

If you were to get stung by the Portuguese Man O'War, Mr Johnston said: 'Occasionally you might have to go to hospital. I have had stings myself and it leaves red marks on your skin and the pain could last up to a couple of hours.'

Don't go to Ebola states, HSE warns

IRISH people are being advised against all non-essential travel to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria because of the threat posed by Ebola.

The advice was issued by the HSE in response to the World Health Organisation's declaration earlier yesterday that the outbreak is an international health emergency.

The WHO also said the outbreak is an extraordinary event posing a health risk to other states.

The HSE said travellers returning from affected areas are advised to seek medical attention should they develop sudden fever, unexplained fatigue, diarrhoea or have other symptoms within 21 days of departure from the affected areas.

The WHO has said a coordinated response was needed to combat the virus, which has killed more than 900 people.

The organisation said the possible consequences of the further international spread of Ebola are 'particularly serious' due to the virulence of the virus.

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