

# Highways and Byways

Newsletter of  
The John Wallis Foundation

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



Greetings,

We are delighted to announce the funding of 26 grants across NSW, Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria and South Australia to small rural community organisations. Once again, we have been able to do this because of the generous support of you, our donors, who continue to help us raise funds.

We are especially delighted that eight of the grants have gone to remote Aboriginal communities or organisations working with Aboriginal students or other community members. The themes running through these grants are of local leadership, local community strength, identity building and healing.

Lots has been happening in and around the Foundation in the last few months. Sr. Gail Worcelo from Green Mountain Monastery in Vermont, USA has been our guest delivering three wonderful John Wallis Memorial Lectures in Parkes, Bathurst and Melbourne during June and July. (see page 2).

## **COMING UP: Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2018:**

We are gearing up for our Yarck to Yea Walk, Ride or Run event. Always a fun event – all ages and abilities welcome.

**Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2018 :** We are also holding our first ever High Tea Fundraiser. During the afternoon we will hear from Kirsty Sword Gusmao, former First lady of Timor Leste and founder of the Aloia Foundation.

Keep a look out for further details on both events.

Thank you as always for your wonderful support of the Foundation.

Liz McAloon,  
Executive Officer



*Above: Artist and traditional weaver Margaret Duncan teaches the women from the remote Kalumburu community – see page 3 for story.*

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*into the highways and byways*

The John Wallis Foundation continues the vision and mission of  
the Missionary Sisters of Service

# Unfolding our role in the universe!



Gail Worcelo from Green Mountain Monastery in Vermont USA arrived in Australia early June and has been inspiring audiences around the country. We were delighted to host Gail for three John Wallis Memorial Lectures in Parkes and Bathurst in NSW, and in Melbourne.

Gail gave stimulating and different presentations in each place, with an overall focus on our role in the vast unfolding universe and our need to develop a mutually enhancing human earth presence. In Bathurst and Parkes the venues were adorned with beautiful fabric panels of animals and natural environments which Gail had brought with her from the US. Audience members walked into a room “teaming” with life and energy.



In each session Gail challenged the audience to think in longer spheres of time and to build new structures of consciousness and culture, as we take on the shared responsibility for our planet moving forward not backwards – into the eco-zoic age – our house of life!

Gail also led us through the three key principles that have shaped the evolutionary process of the universe – differentiation, subjectivity and communion.

In each venue Gail was joined by a local presenter who gave grass roots practical examples of earth care - In Parkes Guy Webb, from SoilCquest, in Bathurst Sally Neaves from the Rahamim Ecology Centre, and in Melbourne Johannes Fischer from the Australian Youth Climate Coalition.

In Melbourne Sherry Balcombe gave a beautiful Acknowledgement of Country, moving the audience with a powerful reading of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Melbourne audience members were also treated to a spectacular photographic panorama – twelve panels featuring the wildflower grasslands of the volcanic plains stretching from Melbourne across most of southern Victoria almost to the border of South Australia.

Many thanks to the communities of Parkes Catholic Parish, Rahamim Ecology Centre, and the great team of John Wallis Foundation helpers who worked to bring these inspiring lectures to fruition!



Sr Gail Worcelo



(l-r) Stancea Vichie MSS, Gail Worcelo & Bernadette Wallis MSS



Sally Neaves



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## Language barrier brings people together

Mitcham, Victoria



Language differences can be a great divide, but at Mitcham Baptist Church it has drawn the 'local' and the Mandarin speaking Chinese faith communities together. Weekly conversation English classes began at the Church last year with support from the John Wallis Foundation. A year down the track numbers have grown from four to 30 and the oldest student is 91 years old.

What began as an idea to support the older Mandarin speakers to manage better in the community has developed into a bridge building exercise where friendships have grown and the communities now mix with greater ease.

Anne Dixon and Hugh Macartney, both former teachers, started the classes after recognising that a lot of the older Chinese in the congregation were isolated, speaking little or no English and spending most days looking after grandchildren.

The congregation has thrown support behind the classes with about 15 people helping to tutor the students, including four who are fluent in English and Mandarin.

"The students vary in language abilities. Some are just beginning and others are involved in discussion groups on topics. We have one student who has a PhD in maths so is very competent in Mandarin," Anne said.

The benefits to everyone involved in the project are astounding. The students learn English, the tutors develop a greater understanding of the Chinese culture and the congregation is richer because the two language groups feel more like one. At weekend worship, morning tea is a much more united event where new friends mingle with each other.

One participant best sums up the success of the classes: "I came to learn English but found love."



## Weaving a new beginning

Kalumburu community in north-west Western Australia

Women from the remote Kalumburu community in north-west Western Australia went looking in their vast backyard (Kwini Country) and found the makings of a wonderful adventure. They found an abundance of pandanus leaf for weaving baskets and myriad plants for dyeing the dried leaves into vibrant colours.

The women, all participants of a revival-weaving project, have learned to weave baskets using local pandanas and plants, and along the way have discovered a lot about their country and themselves.

The traditional weaving project, an initiative of Enterprise Learning Projects, was first run last year with support from the John Wallis Foundation. Project manager Clare Wood said the weaving helped the women develop great pride in their land and in their own abilities. About 12 women, ranging in age from 14 to 50 years, took part in the one-week intensive workshop run by Indigenous weaver and artist Margaret Duncan and her sister, Rhonda Duncan.

The women continued meeting regularly to weave and this year another workshop was held and attracted some new participants. The women hope to weave baskets and share their new-found knowledge with others.

"It's so affirming for the women, who are living with great loss, trauma and health issues within the community, to create something from their own country. One woman was so proud she showed her brother when the basket was finished and he was so proud of her and encouraging," Clare said.

The women gather to improve skills and are strengthening their community and some hope to one day weave products to sell and form a microenterprise. After all, the materials needed are just out the back.

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# Bringing people together... ...Creating new possibilities



## Showing off local lands and culture Wujal Wujal, Northern Queensland



Wujal Wujal students show Brisbane students one of their favourite 'local' snorkeling spots.

Something happened during a Wujal Wujal cultural adventure camp for young leaders last year. They were asked to show some non-Indigenous mates from Brisbane where they lived and share their culture. Joh Anthonis, a counselor with the Wujal Wujal Justice Group, watched the locals change.

"They were explaining about bush food and important ceremonies and taking the visiting students to camp sites and beautiful swimming and fishing spots. The kids from Brisbane were captivated and suddenly a different story, a positive story about Indigenous people, was being told and heard. Our kids were so proud," Joh said.

The camp involved students from Rivermount College in Brisbane coming to Wujal Wujal land, just south of Cooktown in Queensland. Young Wujal Wujal leaders who attend boarding schools in the surrounding districts led the group through the Kuku Yalanji, Kuku Ngyungul and Kuku Jalunji homelands.

Joh said the camp allowed young leaders, who are working hard at their secondary boarding schools, to showcase their community and to tell another story.

"It was great to see these kids feel pride in who they are and where they are from," Joh said. "A lot of these kids do it tough, away from the country and family."

The camp, funded by the Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet and with support from the John Wallis Foundation, included families who hosted the campers on their traditional land and shared their culture.

"Everyone was changed by the experience. "Our kids realised that the knowledge and skills they have are valued and respected by others," Joh said.

Plans are underway for the Wujal Wujal students to visit Rivermount school and families later this year.

## Pride and play returns to local park Tamworth, New South Wales

Jim Finucane is probably one of the most regular, and passionate, visitors to the Westdale Memorial Park in Tamworth. He goes at least twice a week to water the 15 citrus trees, vegetables and flowers planted last year as part of a major project by the OMNI Recreation Men's Shed in Tamworth.

The council park upgrade was a good move and locals, especially families with young children, are also regular visitors. Apart from improving the environment, it is also hoped that the area will provide a good supply of fresh fruit and veggies for locals. One tree has already produced a couple of lemons.

Any concerns about vandals and graffiti have not come to fruition. In fact people involved in correctional service orders tidy the park up every six weeks.

While the Men's Shed contribution was significant, with support from the John Wallis Foundation, the community has also chipped in. Timber for the bench seats was donated by a local business and at least 20 locals have made donations, some buying shrubs to plant.

"The men's shed has been working on the park since 2014 in response to requests from residents," Jim said.

The park was once a significant Tamworth landmark. A public hall on the site was opened in 1924, but last used in 1967 and demolished, three years later. Alongside the hall was a tennis court. In recent years a government grant has made possible restoration of the white entrance arch with brick piers, and turnstile, with the words "Westdale Memorial Park" worked in to the top of the arch in an ornate styling.

The Men's Shed members (pictured) hope the park will feature in a citrus festival being considered for Tamworth.



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# Highways & Byways



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Missionary Sisters of Service Newsletter

PO Box 2075  
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## Missionary Sisters of Service Celebrate their History and Reflect on their Future

The 8<sup>th</sup> July this year marked the beginning of the 75<sup>th</sup> year of the MSS community. A number of events are planned for the jubilee year, beginning with the unveiling of a memorial on Bruny Island in November 2018, and a pilgrimage visiting places significant in the MSS story. We hope many people will join us in these events.

### HONOURING OUR PIONEERS

It was on a visit to Bruny Island, Tasmania in 1933 that a young Father John Wallis was challenged by Kit Hawkins: *"Father, why can't we have sisters to help us bring up our families in faith. Does no one care about us people of the bush?"*

Her challenge remained with Fr John. After years of prayer, searching and reflection, he founded the Missionary Sisters of Service in July, 1944. By the end of that year, six women, Gwen Morse, Kathleen Moore, Alice Carroll, Joyce O'Brien, Valerie Casey and Agnes Ryan, had come together to lay the foundations of what we often simply refer to as MSS.

In this, our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, we honour the people and stories connected with the MSS beginnings. We are creating a memorial comprising two interpretative panels and a central sandstone feature. These will be installed in the grounds of St Brendan's church, Alonnah on Bruny Island.

**On Sunday 25 November 2018, the Memorial will be blessed and dedicated.** Friends and H&B readers, we hope many of you will join us at the Alonnah Community Hall at 12 noon for 'meeting and greeting' and a light lunch, followed by the Blessing and Dedication at 2.30 pm. at the church. The celebration will conclude with Mass.

**RSVP (for catering purposes) and enquiries contact:**  
Carmel Hall mss at [hall.carmel@bigpond.com](mailto:hall.carmel@bigpond.com) or  
Christine O'Halloran at [christineo@netspace.net.au](mailto:christineo@netspace.net.au)



Some of the women at the recent dinner mission conversation with Bernadette Wallis (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) and Deirdre O'Donnell of the MSS Stewardship Council (right).

### TASMANIAN PILGRIMAGE

A pilgrimage to places significant to the MSS story is planned for November this year. It will begin in Launceston with an introduction on the evening of November 21<sup>st</sup>, and conclude in Hobart with breakfast on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> November. The Bruny Island event will be a highlight.



Image courtesy [www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnJMkjiRqH0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JnJMkjiRqH0)

Arrangements include simple accommodation, all food and bus travel. The cost for the pilgrimage will be \$720.00 per person, which includes all meals, accommodation and bus travel.

We invite you, readers and friends, to join us on the bus to various places in Tasmania. Numbers are limited to **35 places only**, and it is filling quickly, so early expressions of interest would be appreciated.

Please contact Pat Quinn MSS on the details below for further information and/or your expression of interest by **31st August 2018**. You will then be sent a registration form. [info@portuinculacentre.com](mailto:info@portuinculacentre.com) or ph. 0422 462 678.

### THE MISSION INTO FUTURE....?

In May our sisters and friends met in a series of consultations in Toowoomba, Melbourne and Hobart, to reflect on the Highways & Byways Movement as a way to extend the MSS spirit and mission, and support those already living this mission, even if not named as such.

A group of young women have been meeting with some MSS over a meal and searching their own sense of call to mission. These women are already involved in mission in various ways, on the highways and byways of their lives:

*Attuned to the times  
working with people  
building communities of meaning and belonging  
wherever they are, in whatever they do.*

People like these women inspire us with hope and confidence in the future of the work of the Gospel in Australia and the potential of the Highways & Byways Movement.



## Lorraine Groves mss: A Woman with the Smell of the Sheep



***Pope Francis wants priests to carry “the smell of the sheep”. Lorraine is not a priest, but she certainly carries the smell of the sheep, having shared the lives of countless people in rural and isolated areas through nearly sixty years as a Missionary Sister of Service. Here’s what she writes about her life:***

Leading a day of reflection for the Oatlands Catholic Women’s League, I took as the theme a poem, *A Thread*, by William Stafford. It speaks to me about my life as a Missionary Sister of Service:

***There is a thread you follow.  
It goes among the things that change.  
But it doesn’t change.  
People wonder about what you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can’t get lost.  
Tragedies happen, people get hurt or die,  
And you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop time’s unfolding  
You don’t ever let go of the thread.***

As I look back on my life I often ponder the influences that formed me. There was “Daddymick” (our grandfather) in Gladstone in the far north-east of Tasmania. Mass was a rare event there, but he would gather us on Christmas Day in the tiny corrugated iron church to pray.

From my cousins in Winnaleah, I learned about our Sisters who visited families in country areas and gave religious instruction. I felt for my cousins. They did not have the opportunity to go to a Catholic School like we did at Beaconsfield. Such experiences woke in me a concern for country people and their lack of opportunity to be nourished in their faith and encouraged in their lives.

Today my thoughts are still for people isolated by distance from opportunities of support and encouragement to grow in faith as they respond to the many challenges life brings them.

I have spent most of my life in country parishes and the correspondence school in Tasmania and some years in NSW and Queensland. I value deeply the power of personal contact with people – in their homes, in the community, in shopping centres and by letter. I well remember a time at the New Norfolk supermarket when, after two and a half hours, I still had only a small tray of celery in my trolley.

I once heard a session on the radio about the art of tea-making in Japan. Making the tea is preparing a sanctuary (a sacred space) for the sharing that happens over the cup of tea. True also in my experience. In numerous visits over the years, I rarely, if ever, refused a cup of tea when offered.

While at Ellendale in the upper Derwent Valley (1989-2005) I was part time Correspondence School and Parish work. From time to time I travelled to different parts of the State to visit families who were doing the lessons. I also organised Family Camps in which we did nothing that a family couldn’t do at home. Parents were involved in story telling and other activities. These were special times. At one of those camps I dressed as a clown. The next day, I wasn’t in clown costume, one little boy brought his father and I heard a sad little voice say “Daddy, the clown has gone”.

Another significant time was when several rural parishes were combined to make the Central Tasmania Parish. The two priests and three religious sisters of the area worked as a team.

I always valued opportunities to work with other church communities and with people not affiliated with any church.

One activity which broadened our outreach to people was to have stalls at local shows like Agfest, Campbell Town Show and Hamilton Show. At the Campbell Town show some of our people knitted sheep to sell to cover the cost of the site. We sold books from the Catholic Bookshop. I remember a man at a nearby machinery stall applauding us and wishing he could have done something like that.

These days I am using threads in another way: bringing people together for making Prayer Rugs for cancer patients and homeless people, items for stillborn and premature babies, etc. I value visits to people more than ever. Whenever I can, I’m off into the country to visit them and I keep contact with many through letter writing.



**When Life deals you scraps, make a quilt: Lorraine mss with Gill Cooper, Kathy Quamby and Margaret Stennings creating beauty with “scraps” of fabric.**