

# Highways and Byways

Newsletter of  
The John Wallis Foundation

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



***"Love: I always think of it with a filter of gratitude"***

Fr John Wallis

Greetings,

Here at the office of the John Wallis Foundation and the Missionary Sisters of Service, gratitude is forever present. We are appreciative of many aspects of our daily work, and are especially aware that none of our core work could be undertaken without support from the broader community.

However, we do not wish to make the *Highways and Byways* Newsletter about asking for money only. *Highways and Byways* grew from a tradition of the Sisters keeping in touch with each other and their forever-increasing network of friends and supporters as they travelled this vast country. Today *Highways and Byways* continues to bring you good news stories from those far-flung regions. When people who may be struggling with mental illness, poverty, isolation or lack of human connectedness are treated with dignity and respect, what flows from this is life-giving. Our stories in this issue are strong examples of this, and with more gratitude, we are thankful for the skills and professionalism with which small community groups and social service organisations go about making a difference.

In each newsletter we usually include a contribution slip. Please don't see this as a requirement or an obligation to give a donation. We are a charity and we will continue to raise funds, but it is never our expectation that contribution slips be returned each newsletter. You are our supporters and connectors across Australia – we love to tell you what is happening and we want to stay in touch with you as the Foundation grows and develops.

We hope you enjoy the read!

Liz McAloon,  
Executive Director



**Above:** Gawler Community House Art Teacher with one of the participants in the Art Classes displaying his artwork – see page 3 for story.

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*into the highways and byways*

The John Wallis Foundation continues the vision and mission of  
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**Above:** Clare Smith, Chair of the JWF Toowoomba Branch (second from right) with participants writing their hopes and dreams for the future and what they are inspired to do post festival.

In December 2017 a number of young people from Toowoomba, Warwick, Surat, Roma and Millmerran in Queensland joined the thousands of other young folk from across Australia at the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Sydney.

The Missionary Sisters of Service were part of the Festival Expo with a retro caravan and an invitation to be inspired by a future Highways and Byways Movement. (See MSS Newsletter for this inspiring story)

The John Wallis Foundation's contribution helped the students own fundraising efforts to get themselves there. The Toowoomba Branch of the Foundation have met and engaged with some of these young students, developing connections and friendships and supporting them into the future.

## Coffee brings job dream closer

### Tatura, Victoria

Tatura's newest coffee hub is almost ready to open. Lattes, macchiatos and cappuccinos will be brewed, tested and critiqued as part of the Tatura Community House's vocational training due to start in Term 2.

In what has grown into an extraordinary community collaboration the Community House will offer barista training to try and enhance employment opportunities for people in the small Victorian town of 4700 people.

The coffee machine (pictured with Daniel who is enrolled in the class) was purchased with support from the John Wallis Foundation, the local Men's Shed made a counter and the local Opportunity shop provided the retro furniture and fittings to create a 'coffee hub' that will be used in the barista training and beyond.

Community house manager Leeane Button said International Women's Day was celebrated at the House with a '100 Years of Marriage' – a fashion parade of 27 local wedding dresses dating back to 1914. Of course, coffee was on the menu!

"There are a lot of coffee shops not just in Tatura, but in the surrounding areas and opportunities for people to gain work. It's great to be able to offer a course that will result in people being job ready," Leeane said.

While the furniture, flooring and machinery is in place, the Community House is just waiting on a grant outcome to go ahead and order the benches.

"It is looking fantastic and we know that a lot of people are really keen to begin the classes. Some of the people have already done vocational training here at the House and see the barista course as a great opportunity to find work," Leeane said.





## Hope grows in safe places

### Bega, New South Wales



Establishing a garden bed isn't a priority for women struggling with family violence or mental health issues. But at the Women's Resource Centre in Bega there's a sense of hope that anything's possible.



With support and the talents of three local women, a series of workshops offered at the Centre unearthed talent, gave women a sense of achievement and taught skills that many can use into the future. Centre coordinator Laura Wilcox said the gardening, singing meditation and mosaic workshops, which received John Wallis Foundation support, broke down a lot of social barriers, attracting women from across the socio-economic spectrum. She said women living with family violence or mental health issues were 'creating' alongside a woman who came because she wanted to learn mosaics.

"One of the other great things about these workshops is that as well as learning a great craft or skill, the women do meet other women who are in similar situations to them. They start exchanging stories and realise they are not alone," Laura said.

"We have worked to create a really safe place and the workshops, that bring women together, reinforce that."

One woman who attended the gardening workshop by Kathleen McCann (pictured) said the learning was wonderful and so was the laughter they shared.

"I absolutely loved this. My knowledge of gardening has increased and now I can grow seedlings at home that we did in our last class," she said.

Laura said the workshops, especially the singing meditation, pushed people out of their comfort zones and gave them a sense of achievement.



## Art class unearths possibilities

### Gawler, South Australia

Most art classes might hope to unearth a talent, even genius. But at the Gawler Community House's art therapy classes success isn't measured by what is on the canvas. Community house coordinator Sharyn Guy said one of the high points of the class was one participant's willingness to stay in the class alone, without a support person, because he said it was a "safe place to be".

The art classes in 2017, run in partnership with MIND for people with mental health issues, have continued informally in 2018 with a volunteer. The classes, which attracted people in their early 20s to people in their 50s, offered a form of psychotherapy, encouraging self-expression through painting, drawing or modeling.

"The classes are about much more than painting, they are about supporting the clients to participate in a process where they create something. Many people with a mental health problem can be isolated and we are trying to prevent that happening by encouraging new connections," Sharyn said.

"Another important outcome is the capacity of people to begin and finish something. Often the lack of motivation makes it difficult to keep going. This is overcome in a class when the tutor and participants provide encouragement to each other."

Sharyn said participants also learned about other classes and social opportunities at the Community House, such as cooking and computer classes. One participant is now enrolled in a different art class, with experienced artists who also sell their work.

"This project has the potential to improve a person's quality of life by opening up other possibilities and networks," Sharyn said.

into the highways and byways

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



### Taking music to where it matters Kangaroo Island, South Australia



Students work to create music using chords they have played on their instruments

Kangaroo Island is known for its pristine environment. Its musicians are currently flying under the radar, but that could end if Carmel Batson has her way.

Carmel, the youth project officer for Drug and Alcohol with the MOBO Group (formerly Finding Workable Solutions) joined forces with professional musician Christian Teusner and travelled the island taking music-making opportunities to young people between 12 and 25 years.

"There is no public transport on Kangaroo Island so many young people are isolated and disconnected from services," Carmel said. For many, this can lead to risky behaviours.

For seven months they travelled to different community centres three times a week taking with them the computers, instruments and know-how to create music. And the young people came and experimented, discovered and developed their musical talents and interests.

"They would come to the workshops and tell us what they wanted to try. Some used, for the first time, a computer music platform, some played instruments, putting together the few chords or notes they knew to create a sound that they could then use on one of the music platforms, refining it over the week," Carmel said.

The results of the workshops, two funded by the John Wallis Foundation, have been astounding. Seventy-five people participated, a CD featuring 23 tracks was produced, talents have been discovered, passions ignited and several of the young people have found work. One performer played at the Island's first fringe festival this year, another has started doing local gigs.

"The workshops suddenly gave some young people the confidence to create."

### The family that eats together ... Kentish, Tasmania

Cassandra Speed isn't interested in creating complicated meals that feature on television cooking shows. Instead, she focuses on nutrition, budgeting and learning to cook basic meals and bringing families together around the table.

Cassandra, coordinator of the Glenhaven Family Care – Kentish Family Support House in Tasmania's northwest, has been breaking down a lot of barriers while running cooking classes for families in the area.

"Lots of parents tell their kids they can't cook because they are in a hurry and need to get dinner ready, or they don't want the kids to make a mess," she said. "During our classes I tell them go ahead and make a mess, as long as you are cooking together."

The classes, run with support from the John Wallis Foundation, recruit families from the nearby Railton Primary School and the wider community. Already 12 families have participated with some families coming to most weekly classes.

Apart from learning that pizzas can have healthy toppings and chocolate cake can be replaced with healthy lunchbox snacks, the families are also learning about each other and the other services provided by the Support House in Kentish, where unemployment is high and wages of half the population are lower than the Tasmanian average.

"Lot of the families who have participated have seen one another in the school but never spoken. Now their social network has expanded. It's also a great opportunity for the families to learn that we provide other supports when needed including emergency relief," she said.

The next class starts in May 2018 and Cassandra is expecting a full kitchen.



Families learn to cook Bliss Balls for a healthy lunchbox snack.

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# Highways & Byways



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PO Box 2075  
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People inspired by  
the life and mission of Jesus,  
attuned to the times  
and needs in their area,  
reaching out to people,  
walking with them,  
building communities  
of meaning and belonging  
wherever they are,  
in whatever they do.

## The Highways & Byways Movement: a mission among people, by people, for people.

In the August 2017 issue of Highways & Byways we posed the question of whether there could be another expression for the spirit and mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service and the John Wallis Foundation. Since then we have formulated one possible expression: a **highways and byways movement**, and devised a logo and mission statement as shown at left.

We know that many people are already living the mission as described in the statement. So is there a need for a movement? We believe bringing people together in a movement with an identity will create a sense of solidarity in a common mission. The movement can provide support and spiritual nourishment and inspiration. Being part of a movement with people similarly inspired can give a sense of solidarity, of being part of something bigger than our individual efforts. Sharing our ideas and experience with others can develop our understanding of the work we are about and of the people we serve.

In December, we took the concept to the Australian Catholic Youth Festival in Sydney. Now we want to put out the idea of this new movement to a wider audience, together with an invitation that, if this new possibility touches something in you, please make contact. You may help found and shape this new Highways and Byways Movement.

### At the Australian Catholic Youth Festival

The Highways & Byways Movement had a caravan in the exhibition area of the Festival, where we welcomed many of the eighteen thousand Festival attendees. Their joy and energy was contagious, the hopes and dreams they shared with us were inspirational. We share something of our experience through these photos.



The sign on the  
letterbox reads:  
... Use a postcard to  
write your prayer  
intention. One of  
our sisters will pray  
for you during 2018.  
Place your card in  
the letterbox.

Clockwise from right: Toowoomba Diocese group debrief after a big three festival days; Corrie mss in conversations with young people; writing their hopes and dreams; Gabrielle Mahony, mss coordinator, discussing the geographical spread of the highways & byways mission by Missionary Sisters of Service and the John Wallis Foundation; Bernadette Madden mss with Fr Harold Camonias from Port Pirie diocese; letterbox with young people's prayer requests.

Photos by Fiona Basile.





# To Serve with Love:

## Meet Betty McManus



Betty McManus mss describes herself as a team player. In her 63 years as a Missionary Sister of Service, we know just how true that statement is. Someone once said to her: "How many people do you think it takes to keep a passenger plane in the air?" It highlighted for her the significance of every person in the team, including those in the background. Betty has richly contributed her particular gifts to the life and mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service, and much of it in the background. She has done so with a great spirit of hospitality, joy, generosity and love.

Betty was born in New Zealand into a Scottish immigrant family, the youngest and only surviving girl, with four brothers. In 1955 she came to Tasmania to join the Missionary Sisters of Service.

How did she learn about this religious congregation which at the time was just eleven years old? She says, "Not long before my father died, (he had been ill for some years) someone gave him a copy of The Annals to read. It contained an article on a new community in Tasmania, then called The Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady. He commented admiringly on the story. At that time I didn't think any more of it."

**Ten years later Betty came across a pamphlet, *Into the Highways and Byways*, the story of the Missionary Sisters of Service and their work. This time she knew it was calling her.**

Over the years Betty has fulfilled many roles and tasks: cooking dressmaking and household sewing, tutoring correspondence courses for children and families and parish pastoral missions in the Toowoomba (Qld) diocese.

Her first posting was at a hostel for young women from the country in Launceston (Tas), run by our sisters at that time. Betty can tell many stories of her time there. She was a stable presence in the life of those girls, someone always there for them.

For the last twenty-five years of her working life Betty was Financial Administrator of the congregation.

Where did Betty learn the skills needed for these various works? In those early years there were no formation programmes available for pastoral work. Our sisters learnt from each other and from reflecting on their experience.

And her practical skills?

"In my family I learnt some down-to-earth common sense which has stood me in good stead," Betty says. After leaving school, she did an apprenticeship in soft furnishings before obtaining a position in the Post Office. There she would have honed her people skills in the years she served the customers.

In the 1960s Betty did a basic introduction to accounting and also a dress-making course. Many of us benefitted from her sewing, as our clothing was made in-house. As for the accounting, it led to the role of mss business administrator from the early 1980s on.

In 1978 Betty participated in the year-long Assumption Institute course. She has maintained some wonderful friendship from that experience, even until today. Another memorable experience for her was the opportunity to do a six-weeks study tour of the Holy Land in 1994.

When asked what she was going to do when she retired at the end of 2004, Betty's standard reply was, "As little as possible." But that "little" keeps her very fully occupied – in the parish, neighbourhood, St Thomas' retirement village and beyond.

**There is not enough space here to adequately describe the rich tapestry of her life. Looking back over her life, she says, "I have been content in all works I have done". To her we say, "Betty, our mss congregation would be much the poorer had you not come across the Tasman and thrown in your lot with us. Thank you for all you have been and are among us."**



Betty in the early 1970s visiting correspondence school families who were also on School of the Air.



Betty (left), with June Dunford mss on holidays at the Gold Coast 2015

## DOREEN MARY JONES mss 1935 - 2018

**4<sup>th</sup> January this year we were saddened by the death of Doreen Jones.**

Though she had not been well for some time, it was only two weeks earlier that she was diagnosed with cancer. When she heard the diagnoses, she responded with: "I've had a good life." She used the short time left to her to express her gratitude to all who had been part of her life. Inspirational in life, she continued to be inspirational in her dying. Rest in peace, Doreen. We miss you.

Doreen's story appeared in H&B April 2017.

