

Highways and Byways

A COMMUNITY OF SERVICE

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



Greetings everyone,

Another milestone in the story of the Missionary Sisters of Service is about to begin. We are now in the 75th year since the community began. Celebrations will really take off from 8th July next year which is the actual 75th anniversary when four women, Gwen, Alice, Joyce and Kathleen, came together in Launceston, Tasmania, with the founding vision of Fr. John Wallis. They were entering risky territory having very meagre resources but a powerful commitment to begin a mission which would take them into the lives and homes of people beyond the cities and towns.

As more women joined the fledgling community, it stretched its wings, decade by decade, to reach out to people in the vast outback places, the towns, and cities across many parts of Australia. Reading the "signs of the times", in the world and Australia, and being open to the change and adaptation needed to respond to these signs, has been a hallmark of the mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service. Their motto from 1944, inspired by the great banquet story in Luke 14:15-24, has been "INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS".

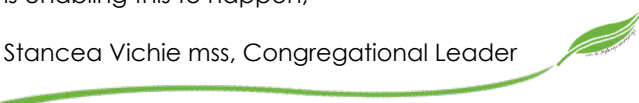
As you know, the MSS set up the John Wallis Foundation in June 2010 to continue the vision and mission they had developed through the years with a view to the mission continuing beyond the life of the present MSS community of women. A very exciting moment for all we sisters has arrived in that the mission will now be able to continue with greater stability and stronger opportunities for long-term commitment to communities, particularly in the rural and regional areas of the country. The great work begun by the John Wallis Foundation since 2011 through the annual Small Grants programme to small community projects will continue alongside this strengthened commitment to communities.

The mission of the Foundation will be absorbed into a broadened scope made possible by the setting up of an entity which will be called *Highways and Byways* – a *Community of Service*. This development will allow great opportunities for partnerships and expansion of the mission.

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary of our community, it is as though another re-founding is happening to the great joy of we Missionary Sisters of Service, and undoubtedly, Father John would be equally delighted with this development.

With gratitude to you all for being on the journey which is enabling this to happen,

Stancea Vichie mss, Congregational Leader



We are excited that the activities of the John Wallis Foundation will be operating under our new Public Benevolent Institution *Highways and Byways*. We are also delighted that we can now expand and grow the mission of the MSS into the future.

We have developed this new structure to enable us to offer full tax benefits for our donors as we seek philanthropic funds to continue to build *Highways and Byways*. It also gives us opportunities to partner with other like minded organisations across the country to achieve our mission. We look forward to keeping you abreast of new programs and developments as 2019 unfolds. Thank you for your continued support – it is greatly appreciated.

Liz McAloon,
Executive Officer

Below: *Former First Lady of Timor Leste Kirsty Sword Gusmão* being interviewed by Stancea Vichie MSS at the John Wallis Foundation High Tea held on 11th Nov 2018 in Melbourne.



into the highways and byways

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

John Wallis Foundation High Tea 11th November 2018

Melbourne, Vic

A happy crowd gathered at the Ringwood Cricket Club in Melbourne to enjoy our first ever High Tea Fundraiser. Kirsty Sword Gusmão, former first Lady of East Timor was our guest presenter and was interviewed in a Q and A session by Stancea Vichie MSS. Guests were totally focused as Kirsty talked about her support of the East Timorese people and for her ongoing advocacy of women and girls through the Alola Foundation which Kirsty founded in 2001 from a tiny office space in Dili. Today the Alola Foundation is managed by an East Timorese staff of more than 100 people. Guests enjoyed delicious High Tea treats and tried their luck at the raffle and bidding on Silent Auction items. Overall which the Foundation raised approximately \$3,000. Many thanks especially to Amanda Freeman our new part-time Projects Officer and event organizer par excellence!



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Young parents think ahead

Swansea, New South Wales

Most older parents discover that life changes and often gets a little easier once their children grow up. But surviving those early years can be tough and the Swansea Community Cottage reckons a lot of young parents need a hand. That's just what they offered last year with support from the John Wallis Foundation.

The Cottage developed Life After Nappies; three 20-week long programs providing practical support and information for young parents. The programs also helped young people explore career and work opportunities.

The first 20-week life skills parent group taught nutrition, healthy choices both mentally and physically, cooking on a budget, life options including studying, employment and further training. The second program, facilitated by Hunter TAFE, earned participants a Certificate Two in Community Services. An early intervention/development group was also offered as an extension of the Cottage's supported playgroup. It featured guest speakers and examined the link between study options and learning how to become an adult learner. In the final 10 weeks of the program, a speech pathologist facilitated the group and offered one on one assessments for the participants' children.

Program coordinator Annie Sinclair said the programs motivated some participants to further their studies. One participant has enrolled to study nursing and two have gone on to do Community Services Certificate 3 at TAFE.

One participant, Charmaine, is 19 and has two sons aged three and one. "This program has opened up learning options and reignited a passion to learn. I was a bit lost before this and had fallen into the parent trap of thinking my sole purpose was to look after everyone else'," she said.

Mentor Ashley with Emily and her daughter, Paige, during a workshop.



Deepening cultural understanding across the Forster community

Forster, New South Wales

A program originally designed to capture the oral history of Worimi elders to be used in local primary schools has expanded and morphed into a wonderful series of cultural cruises along the mid north coast open to all. With the support of the Forster Neighborhood Centre, Worimi elders are recording their oral histories through this unique way.

One cruise has been completed, from which a video has been produced. The feedback from local people on the boat has been very positive with comments such as "This is the first time I have spoken with a local Aboriginal person" and "I had never realized how tough life was on the mission and still is for Aboriginal people today in this region".



The intention is that once more cruises are undertaken and more videos completed, this material will be used with the elders in school settings as well as more broad community exposure. The Neighborhood Centre is aiming to have these videos housed permanently, accessible to the local community and beyond.

Local Worimi elder Aunty Lyn leading the first cultural cruise along the mid north coast of NSW.

into the highways and byways





Lively, articulate and resilient.....

...leadership emerges from traumatic beginnings

STARTTS Weekly Youth Group Coffs Harbour NSW

"You can call in to the office and I will tell you all about the program; or you can brave the noise of sixty kids having fun and see for yourself what happens at our weekly gathering". This was the invitation extended to Judy Cain from the JWF Melbourne Branch on a recent visit to the North Coast of NSW from Dianne Jacobus, Project Worker for STARTTS (NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors) in Coffs Harbour. Without hesitation she decided a visit to the local Guide Hall to meet some of the young people was too good to miss.

Coffs Harbour is one of four Refugee Settlement locations in NSW and STARTTS is a key organisation providing support services in that area. For the past 4½ years Dianne, with the help of workers from Groundworks Youth Service and volunteers, has run a weekly program for young people using music, ball games and small group activities to build connections amongst the group and with youth workers. The program was instigated following discussions with young refugees at a STARTTS youth camp. They indicated to Dianne that they needed somewhere safe to hang out with each other and share their stories of transition into a new culture.

The original group of 14 were mostly from African countries but the number of regular attendees has grown to 65 with newly arrived young people from Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Iraq now joining in. They come from 8 different schools in the area and stay for up to 2½ hours after school. A few older members have now finished school but still turn up to catch up with their friends and chat with Dianne and other adult workers.

The John Wallis Foundation has provided STARTTS with a grant of \$3,000 to increase the well-being and leadership skills for young refugees. A number of natural leaders have emerged. A recent camp in Newcastle provided opportunities for participants to get to know each other better and contribute to the overall success of the camp.



Staff and participants in the STARTTS Weekly youth group
(L – R) Amina, Matt, Hilary, Dianne, Samson, Innocent, and
Judy Cain JWF Melbourne Branch member.

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The Story That Made Us Who We Are

A new memorial standing outside St Brendan's church at Allonah, Bruny Island, celebrates the beginnings and the ongoing story of the Missionary Sisters of Service and its mission. On Sunday 25th November 2018, a great gathering of Sisters, John Wallis Foundation members, friends and supporters made the pilgrimage to Bruny Island for its blessing.

It was on Bruny Island that our story began. In 1933 a young priest, Fr John Wallis, was visiting the Hawkins family when he was challenged by a mother's cry: "Why can't we have sisters to help us.... Does no one care about us people of the bush?"

Since 1944 the Missionary Sisters of Service have gone into the highways and byways, seeking out *people of the bush* and in many other places where people are isolated from community and opportunity to become all they can be.

Looking back on the 75 years since those beginnings, we are amazed at where that mission has taken us. As the needs of people and the conditions of their lives changed, the Missionary Sisters of Service opened themselves to the challenge.

That openness to new ways of responding to new needs continues to today. For the past eight years, the John Wallis Foundation has continued and expanded that mission. Today, the development of *Highways and Byways: a Community of Service*, opens up still further opportunities for reaching out to people, supporting them in their hopes and aspirations for themselves and their communities.

The memorial was blessed and dedicated by Emeritus Archbishop Adrian Doyle of Hobart, a long time friend of Fr John and MSS. The ceremony was followed by the celebration of Mass in the church.

Prior to the liturgies, pilgrims gathered at the Alonnah Community Hall where they shared a light lunch. They met there again for afternoon tea after Mass.

We congratulate the Hobart Branch of the John Wallis Foundation. In consultation with the MSS Stewardship Council, they worked tirelessly to bring the idea of a memorial to its fruition. The image shows one of the two panels of the memorial.

A busload of pilgrims began their journey to Bruny Island in Launceston, the place where the congregation began. Over four days their journey took them via places significant to the history of the Missionary Sisters of Service, in Launceston, Derby and Scottsdale in Tasmania's northeast, then via Longford and Oatlands to Hobart where the pilgrims visited St Mary's Cathedral, then to Richmond, a parish where our Sisters worked over many years and the place of Australia's oldest Catholic church, and Penna, where for many years we had a retreat and holiday house. Many memories and stories were shared during the journey.

The pilgrimage climaxed at Allonah, where the pilgrims were joined by many others who had begun their pilgrimage to Bruny Island in Hobart.

A MISSIONARY CHALLENGE...

In 1933 Fr John Wallis founded in Tasmania the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady, now known as the Missionary Sisters of Service.

The Sisters work both from an inner pathway, as they would say, they travelled 'into the highways and byways' wherever the needs of people called them. The Sisters' experience of the land, its people and communities they saw has shaped the down-to-earth Australian character that is distinctive of this group of women.

MILESTONES for the Sisters

- 1933 First women volunteered to pioneer the new community known then as Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady, with the motto 'into the highways and byways'.
- 1940 Correspondence courses sent to 110 children on Flinders Island.
- 1946 First Parish Mission. Two Sisters linked to Derby Parish.
- 1949 Experimented with using a caravan during Parish Missions to high communities and teaching facilities would be readily available.
- 1951 Formal approval given by Church authorities for establishment as a Religious Congregation.
- 1957 First foundation on the mainland at Parkes, NSW. (St Ignace).
- 1962-63 Time of renewal in the spirit of Vatican II.
- 1964 Second mainland foundation in Queensland, Queensland (St Ignace).
- 1971 Third mainland foundation at Whyalla, S.A. (St Ignace).
- 1973 Congregation's title changed from Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady to Missionary Sisters of Service (MSS).
- 1982-83 Central house transferred from Tasmania to Melbourne, Victoria.
- 1986 A Missionary Sister of Service was appointed as pastoral leader of a growing country parish for the first time in Tasmania.
- 1987-88 Pastoral ministry extended in the diocese of Tasmania, Northampton, Cairns and Brisbane, as well as the international rural ministry.
- 2000 The MSS celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of their Congregation.
- 2018 The John Wallis Foundation launched.

The Sisters have a special love for those who are on the margins: 'geographically, culturally, socially, economically and spiritually. Their mission is to be 'good news to the poor, to bring liberty to the oppressed, to sight to the blind and to set free the oppressed' (Luke 4: 18-19). The particular calling and gift of the Missionary Sisters of Service is one of deep love and friendship for all people and the earth.

Father John's frequent reminder to 'look at big things' and 'look at the small things' and the Sisters to be 'good news to the poor' and 'bring liberty to the oppressed' are the guiding principles of the Missionary Sisters of Service.

Over the years, their travelling ministry has included pastoral leadership, family support, health education, immigration services, staffing Catholic schools, chaplaincy, counselling, retreats, spiritual guidance, advocacy, befriending, refugees and encouraging meaningful volunteering.

A LEGACY FOR THE FUTURE...

With the passage of time and a decreasing number of active Sisters, a challenging initiative has emerged. Together with the Sisters, a group of dedicated and courageous men and women from all walks of life formed the JOHN WALLIS FOUNDATION in 2010.

The aim of this Foundation is to continue the missionary outreach of the Sisters in their 'temporal' in the spirit of the Gospel. The Foundation seeks to be a presence of hope, encouragement and empowerment. It supports people and projects which express the particular character and spirit of the Missionary Sisters of Service.

The Foundation was started with an initial grant from the Missionary Sisters of Service. It invites and welcomes contributions and bequests from people desiring to support the work of the Gospel as expressed in the spirit and vision of the Missionary Sisters of Service.

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Father John Wallis Honoured by his Alma Mater

Father John Wallis was recently inducted into the Assumption College (Kilmore Vic) Hall of Excellence. He was one of eight recipients of the award which sets out to honour the achievements of some of the College's finest former students. He was a boarder at the College 1924 – 1926.

The awards were made at a Gala Dinner on 27th October, with over 700 people in attendance.

Bernadette Wallis mss received the award on behalf of Fr John. It was indeed an amazing evening of celebration and honour for Fr John, for all of us Missionary Sisters of Service and the John Wallis Foundation.

A number of other former collegians received awards of various kinds, including some members of the Australian Women's Cricket team.

Reflecting on the evening, Congregational Leader Stancea Vichie wrote: *'It is a wonderful honour that Fr John has been selected as an inductee into the Assumption College Hall of Excellence. He certainly had many stories to share about his time at the College. He was also grateful for the opportunities he received there which paved the way for the next stages of his commitment to God's mission as a priest of the Archdiocese of Hobart and the founding of the Missionary Sisters of Service.'*



The spirit of mission that imbued him and the MSS for the past 75 years continues to expand today through the John Wallis Foundation and now through Highways and Byways: a Community of Service.

It was fitting that Carmel Hall mss was able to attend the award night. Carmel has made a significant contribution to the archival history of Fr John from his early years until the end of his life. Representatives of the MSS Stewardship Council and the Board of the John Wallis Foundation were also present, as well as a number of Fr John's nieces and nephews.

This year Assumption College celebrates 125 years of its existence. We congratulate all who have contributed to making the College a centre of educational and formational excellence for generations of students.

Each year the College has partnered the John Wallis Foundation for the Yarck to Yea Ride/Run/Walk event, assisting with transport among other things. Thank you, Assumption College.



Present at the Assumption College award-giving dinner were representatives of Missionary Sisters of Service and the John Wallis Foundation, a nephew and nieces of Fr. John. From left: Bernadette Madden mss, Joan Donoghue, Jane Fulton, Gabrielle McMullen, Bernadette Wallis mss, Kathleen Corcoran, Carmel Hall, mss, Gerard Wallis, Margaret Percy, Frances Grindlay, Moira White, Anne Fulton and Stancea Vichie mss.