

# Highways and Byways – A Community of Service

## Newsletter

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



Greetings everyone,

We have almost reached the end of 2019 and once again we say Thank You to all of you who have supported the works of Highways and Byways during 2019. It has been a full, exciting and productive year.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2019 our 2020 Small Grants Program opened for applications. This year our theme is '**Nourishing our Land and Our Communities**'. As with 2019, our grants are open to communities in the areas where the MSS live or have lived and worked over the past 75 years. We are particularly keen to support communities who are struggling with the ongoing challenges of intensifying drought conditions in rural Australia. If you know anyone who may be interested in applying for a small grant - up to \$3,000, please ask them to contact us on the details below or look up our website for more information.

<https://highwaysandbyways.org.au/>

On the 31<sup>st</sup> October two members of our Toowoomba Branch, Therese and Nev Hunt, represented Highways and Byways at a special event in Thallon, a small town (pop 250) in south west Queensland. The Women's Weekly had approached Thallon to do a story on resilient women in rural areas during tough times. Highways and Byways were officially invited as the Thallon community decided to launch their Community Garden whilst the Women's Weekly Team were there. The Community Garden was funded from a Highways and Byways Small Grant in 2018. During the visit, Therese and Nev got to spend some time with the Women's Weekly team and gave them a great deal of history on the Missionary Sisters of Service and their ongoing mission in the area. Stay tuned for a mention in the forthcoming summer edition of The Women's Weekly!

In the last two editions of this newsletter we have discussed developing a longer-term program in rural Australia where Highways and Byways can partner with local organisations to support those most vulnerable and marginalised in the community.

We are delighted to announce that we will be commencing a 10-month pilot program in Roma, Queensland in February 2020.

Highways and Byways – A Community of Service will contract Megan Brown, of Chandra Yoga and Well Being to develop programs such as these listed below, some of which Megan is already running and developing further.

- A life skills program for local young people between the ages of 12 and 21 with a range of challenges such as autism, social anxiety and isolation, and learning difficulties.
- Working with the Indigenous Community to address areas of local concern.
- Developing a Community garden – Working with community groups to involve locals in the maintenance and daily running of gardens. Young adults that are having trouble engaging with others will be the main focus in partnership with the local youth officer.
- Programs for isolated seniors in the township: Organizing activities in health & well-being for seniors to participate in, such as, gentle exercise, dance, gardening or cooking activities that are of low cost.
- Support of those struggling with the ongoing grind of drought and lack of income.

We are planning to officially launch the Roma Program on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March in Roma at Chandra Yoga and Well Being Centre with Emeritus Bishop Bill Morris, who has recently joined our organisation as a Patron.

We look forward to keeping in touch in 2020 and thank you again for your support.

Liz McAloon, Executive Officer

### SAVE THE DATE!

*The Toowoomba 2020  
John Wallis Memorial Lecture  
Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton*



Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020

2.00pm at St. Theresa's  
Parish Centre, Campbell St  
Toowoomba, QLD.

Contact: Mary Cleary MSS  
[marycleary5@bigpond.com](mailto:marycleary5@bigpond.com)  
or 07 4634 9786 to book and  
for further information.

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132

Highways and Byways – A Community of Service continues the spirit  
and mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service and Fr John Wallis



## A community of young women sometimes lost for words .... finds a voice **Port Augusta, South Australia**



Dusty Feet Mob dancers usually let their feet do the talking. But for ten weeks leading up to December the girls are discovering different ways to express their joy, anger and grief.

A ten-week program, supported by Highways and Byways and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress in Port Augusta, is helping a group of local Indigenous teenagers navigate their way through some life challenges. The participants aged between eight and 16 are members of the Dusty Feet Mob of dancers or their friends and relatives.

The program covers a different theme each week and is run by volunteers including co-facilitator Chelsea Size and members of the community.

Chelsea said the themes chosen were a response to community needs, particularly the grief experienced so regularly by so many young people.

"As a non-Indigenous person who has been part of this community for many years, the constant grief caused by deaths of older and young community members is unfamiliar to me. These young people don't get time to grieve or heal before they are confronted with another death," Chelsea said. "We are including spirituality in the program so that the girls can discover words, practices and rituals that could help them."

A highlight of the program will be a trip out of Port Augusta on an elder-led tour of a sacred site that the girls would not be able to go to alone. Chelsea said the strengthening of their cultural knowledge and stories was vital to the girls' sense of self.

"We have made this space and this program special for the girls. At the first session they walked into the hall and saw lovely food and beautiful flowers on the table and we gave them journals decorated with Aboriginal art," she said

"The girls know we want this to be special for them and funding allows us to do that."



## Women come together to bring healing and change to communities **Toowoomba, Queensland**

African-born women in Toowoomba concerned about forced marriage, mental illness, family violence and other issues have been given a voice through a project launched by Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) with support from Highways and Byways.

The project, Women2Women, gathers together women who are concerned about forced marriage in their communities. Liz Payne, ACRATH's forced marriage worker, said the response at the first meeting was 'extraordinary', attracting women in their 20s, 30s and 40s from six African countries.

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## Different communities, same problems. Women come together to bring change to communities ... cont.

"The women were very open about the fear of forced marriage, family violence and mental illness and the disrespect amongst the younger generations in their community," Liz said.

"The women were confident about setting the agenda on issues and will be part of the two-day planning sessions this month. It became clear very early in our first meeting that these women want an opportunity to talk freely about these issues and to be supported in finding solutions."

Liz hopes some older women will join the group and share their wisdom and experience. She said many of the women are distressed by the lack of respect shown to them by younger members of their own communities.

"These women are extraordinary when you think what they have endured to leave their own countries and come to Australia. Many have survived the journey from war-torn countries," Liz said.

"Now they are showing more courage by saying what current problems they want to address in their communities."

Liz said while forced marriage was something that ACRATH could focus on, other issues raised in Women2Women might mean inviting other experts to the group. Women2Women was established following years of work in the Toowoomba community and schools by ACRATH QLD and the Missionary Sisters of Service.



## Creating new connections one stitch at a time

### Clarendon Vale, Tasmania

Liz Selkirk hopes relationships, as well as garments, will be created at the Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood Centre's new sewing classes. The *Buttons, Bobbins, Beginners and Beyond* sewing project began in early November with support from Highways and Byways.

The sewing classes in Hobart will give novice sewers the chance to learn skills from older and experienced sewers who are part of an established social sewing group that gathers at the centre each Tuesday to sew for not-for profit organisation Operation Christmas Child.

The new two-hour weekly sewing classes were started to give people, particularly young mums and those new to the area the chance to learn a new skill, learn how to use a sewing machine and how to hand sew and mend clothing.

"A lot of people in our community can't afford to buy a sewing machine, but want the skills to make their own clothes, or to mend or alter clothes. We have the machines here that people can use to learn and the community members to teach them" Liz Said.

As well as machines, the Clarendon Vale Neighbourhood Centre has another valuable commodity - a group of highly experienced, older mentors, who are more than willing to share their knowledge. Liz who is the Program Development Worker at the Centre, believes the new sewing classes will create opportunities for both groups to get to know one another and to develop relationships that will strengthen bonds in and with the community.

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"Learning to make something can give people a great sense of achievement and confidence. It is also an important skill to have if you don't have a lot of spare money to spend on clothes," Liz said.

"It's also a fantastic way for the experienced sewing mentors in the community to see just how valuable their skills are".

"We plan for the program participants to start and finish a project during the first 10 weeks of the classes.

After that the classes may continue if people are keen, or they may just want to come and use the sewing machines. We are here to provide what the community wants."

### **Free and willing to be part of the community** **St Helens, Tasmania**

Tani Langoulant reckons the success of the Free2b Girls program, that she brought to the small Tasmanian coastal town of St Helens, is a team effort. The teenage girls who turn up each Wednesday to help set the agenda, local volunteers provide their time and skills, the Neighbourhood House provides the space and organisations including Highways and Byways provide financial support.

For two years the girls aged between 12 and 16 have participated in the program, which provides them with extra support in their lives. The successful program has spread to nearby St Marys, where a Free2b group was recently established, also with support from Highways and Byways.

The two-hour weekly Free2b sessions provide a space where the girls can express themselves without judgement, pursue creative interests and learn new skills from local mentors. Tani said the volunteers who help run programs, such as cooking, craft and outdoor activities, don't just come in and assume they can teach something to the girls. They spend time getting to know the girls and finding out what they want to learn. Recent projects include designing and embellishing clothes, cooking classes and tie dyeing tee-shirts, all involving local business people and residents.

"Free2b is about developing trust between the volunteers from the community and the girls. Once the relationship has been established the rest flows from that," Tani said.

"These are life skills the girls are learning. Not just how to do or make something, but how to engage with people in their own community," Tani said. "The project is also helping to build bridges between young people in this town and the older generation.

The girls (pictured at a recent outing) are currently planning a 'high-tea' at the local nursing home. They have already visited to find out what food and music the residents want served at the highly-anticipated event.



# Highways & Byways



Volume 52 no. 3 *Missionary Sisters of Service Newsletter*  
December 2019

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## ***Pilgrimage: The Lure of the Periphery***

We welcomed a number of our Sisters to Melbourne, Victoria, between 23-26 October for our Chapter Assembly, which occurs every few years; the theme on this occasion was *Pilgrimage - The Lure of the Periphery*.

The Chapter is a special time for us to come together as a congregation, to reflect and celebrate together what has been, and what is yet to come. It was a great joy to also welcome members of our MSS Stewardship Council, Board directors and staff from our mission entity Highways and Byways – A Community of Service, representatives from our Highways and Byways branches (including Toowoomba and Hobart), MSS staff and a number of friends who have journeyed with the MSS over the many years (shown in group photo above).

Each morning commenced with a time of prayer and refectio. In a beautiful and moving ritual on the second morning, we were each reminded of our Baptismal call to go out into the world as living signs of God's love, mercy and friendship. "We are bearers of hope and life, with Jesus as our model," said Corrie van den Bosch MSS, who led the ritual.

During the Assembly, we signed the Memorandum of Understanding between MSS and Highways and Byways – A Community of Service. On the final day we shared our thoughts and dreams of the MSS legacy, and we opened up the conversation about the way forward for Highways and Byways, which is doing amazing work, and providing much needed grants for community projects in rural and remote areas of Australia.

MSS congregational leader Stancea Vichie MSS, and Bernadette Wallis MSS re-committed to their roles as our leadership team, along with the Stewardship Council members who re-committed to continuing their dedicated involvement with us.

We ended our afternoon on the final day by travelling to the Springvale Cemetery where some of our Sisters are buried. There we celebrated their lives with a graveside ritual.

We enjoyed such a beautiful and blessed time together, reflecting on our lives as MSS, and joining with friends and colleagues from across Australia, who are part of our Highways and Byways journey.

A big thank you to everyone! We're so grateful for the gift of friendship, for the hope and Spirit that is so alive in all of us, and in those we encounter. We wouldn't be who we are without you! The back page of this newsletter features a range of photos from this gathering.





## Walking Pilgrimage on Bruny Island, Tasmania

### In the Footsteps of Fr John Wallis: Bruny Island, Tasmania Pilgrimage

*"I went around to Adventure Bay to see some people. The scenery there is simply superb – high cliffs – at the back high forest clad ranges – an occasional mill at work – the road winding in and out – through ferns – prickly wattle – native Laurel – and a host of other shrubs. ... I had a full week there [on Bruny] It is about 40 miles from north to south. I suppose I covered about 160 miles on bike, horse and foot during my trip." - excerpt from Dear Mother, Dear Father: Letters Home from John Corcoran Wallis 1927 – 1949.*

It was within this missionary spirit of Fr John Wallis, the founder of the Missionary Sisters of Service, that 27 people gathered at Adventure Bay on Bruny Island from 21-24 November 2019 to participate in a commemorative pilgrimage. The pilgrims included a number of our Sisters who travelled from Toowoomba, Queensland, Hobart, Tasmania and Melbourne, Victoria, along with a number of friends of the Congregation who travelled from Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Tasmania, and even New Zealand!

Each day commenced with a morning reflection, reading excerpts from letters written by Fr John Wallis, then 23-years-old and freshly ordained, who travelled to the remote island of Bruny for the first time 'on mission' to find and minister to Catholic families living there. His letters speak of the rugged and beautiful terrain, the challenges of travelling through dense bushland to find the isolated families, and his love and concern for those he encountered.

With Fr John's words in our hearts and minds, we set off each day on a different walking track. Day one saw us walking along Adventure Bay to Grass Point. The more adventurous and agile walkers kept climbing to the summit of Fluted Cape, enjoying stunning views across Adventure Bay. On day two we travelled to South Bruny National Park and walked through Labillardiere National Park. We ate lunch on the beach overlooking Great Taylors Bay and ended the day sharing reflections of our time together, and the growing connection between the pilgrims.

On day three we traversed Cape Queen Elizabeth on the south eastern part of north Bruny. Another smaller group set off to Dennes Point to understand more deeply the place where Fr John landed on the ferry to commence his own pilgrimage on Bruny Island. As we walked along each day taking in the stunning scenery, including abundant flora and birdlife, we shared stories, and deepened our connections with each other, with the land, and with the story of Fr John Wallis and the Missionary Sisters of Service. We took time to appreciate the great sense of adventure and determination espoused by Fr John during his 'island mission'.

We ended our pilgrimage with Mass led by Fr Chris Hope and concelebrated with Fr Graeme Howard at St Brendan's Catholic Church, in Alonnah, Bruny Island. We are grateful to the locals who joined us and who so generously provided afternoon tea. This event officially ends our 75-year anniversary celebrations, though we're sure we'll still find things to celebrate in coming months! Again, a big thank you to everyone who has been part of our journey - we are so grateful to all of you!



**Captions from top:** Bernadette Wallis MSS, Stancea Vichie MSS, Frances Mongan PBVM, Carmel Wallis PBVM, Rosemary Terry PBVM, Corrie van den Bosch MSS and Bernadette Madden MSS; Bernadette Wallis MSS and Joan Kenny; Margaret Sutherland, Nancy Doyle MSS, Mary Cleary MSS, Angela and Jack Hazebroek, Judy Hague, John McKean CFC, Lorraine Groves MSS, Carmel Wallis MSS, Stancea Vichie MSS, Bernadette Wallis MSS and Margaret Casey.

See more photos of the Bruny Island pilgrimage at: [www.facebook.com/missionarysistersserviceaus](https://www.facebook.com/missionarysistersserviceaus)



## Bruny Island Pilgrimage, Tasmania, 21-24 November



**Clockwise from top left:** Mary Williams and Corrie van den Bosch MSS leading the way; Rosemary Terry PBVM, Corrie van den Bosch MSS, Stancea Vichie MSS, Tom Buykx, Clara Rizzi, Bernadette Wallis MSS and Mary Williams; Bernadette Wallis MSS and Bernadette Madden MSS; The group enjoying sunshine on the walk; Stancea Vichie MSS lending a hand; The group of pilgrims and locals at St Brendan's Catholic Church, Alonnah, Bruny Island; Nancy Doyle MSS and Pat Quinn MSS; Stancea Vichie MSS, Nancy Doyle MSS, Margaret Casey, Carmel Wallis PBVM, Judy Hague, Margaret Sutherland and Bernadette Wallis MSS.



See more Bruny Island pilgrimage photos at [www.facebook.com/missionarysistersserviceaus](https://www.facebook.com/missionarysistersserviceaus)  
All photos by Fiona Basile, [www.fionabasile.com](http://www.fionabasile.com)



## Missionary Sisters of Service 2019 Chapter Assembly



**Clockwise from top left:** Highways and Byways: A Community of Service board members, directors and staff; Anointing with oil during a morning reflection on our Baptismal call; MSS Stewardship Council Deirdre O'Donnell, Prof Gabrielle McMullen, Bernadette Wallis MSS, Stancea Vichie MSS, David Alcock; Bernadette Madden MSS (Melbourne, Vic) and Cheryl Thomson MSS (Whyalla, SA); The MSS taking a vote; Frances McShane MSS (Hobart, Tas) and Marie Murphy MSS (Mount Pleasant, Qld); Beryl Gleeson MSS (Toowoomba, Qld), Bernadette Wallis MSS (Melbourne, Vic), Mary Cleary MSS (Toowoomba, Qld); Claire Lawler (H&B Hobart branch) and Clare Smith (H&B Toowoomba branch).



### Marie Carroll MSS; 90 years young!

Congratulations to Marie Carroll MSS who celebrated her 90th birthday on 5th November 2019. Marie celebrated the occasion in style with 60 people including MSS, friends and family in a Toowoomba pub.

Marie has been an MSS for more than 60 years, working in Tasmania, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland.

Some of her more interesting expressions of mission included working in Emerald gem fields, 315km west of Rockhampton, Queensland. She was also part of the aerial ministry in the Diocese of Rockhampton where she and the priest pilot, Fr Terry Loth, would fly from Longreach to visit people living on the big and isolated cattle and sheep stations; she did this for a number of years.

We're also grateful to Marie who co-ordinated and distributed the *Overlander*, our internal MSS newsletter. Each of the Sisters would send in their news, whereupon Marie would cut and paste the letters together into one document, photocopy it, and post it out to each of the Sisters across Australia. Marie did this for 32 years, with this job ending just in October this year. A big thank you, and congratulations again to Marie!