

Highways and Byways – A Community of Service

Newsletter

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



Greetings everyone,

Our last edition of December 2019 feels like worlds away! In these strange new times during which many people have already suffered through fires, drought, floods and much devastation of our natural environment and wildlife, we continue to adapt to living through a pandemic. We hope you are able to stay well, look out for each other and support those amongst us who are most vulnerable.

As is usual for our Highways and Byways office, we have had a full start to the year as we progress our way through assessing the 2020 Small Grants Program applications. Our theme for 2020 is "Nourishing our Land and Our Communities" and we have had some excellent and ambitious applications. We will be announcing the successful 2020 grant recipients in the May 2020 Newsletter.



Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton

The first of the 2020 John Wallis Memorial Lectures was held in Toowoomba on International Women's Day, Sunday 8th March 2020 with Lindy Chamberlain-Creighton as guest speaker. Lindy thoroughly engaged her audience of 300 plus with her talk "A Personal Journey of Faith" during which she emphasized the power we each own to address life's challenges. Lindy spoke passionately of the power of forgiveness and her deep, sustaining faith.

On March 10th in Roma we were delighted to launch "Seeds of Connection" our first ever longer-term program of community support. *Highways and Byways - A Community of Service* has partnered with Megan Brown of Chandra Yoga and Wellbeing in Roma, with program mentoring and support from Jen Coggan of Injune. Local community member Glen Telford was MC for the event and Patron of Highways and Byways Emeritus Bishop Bill Morris officially launched the program in front of an audience of more than 50 local Roma community members and organisation representatives.



Tallis Landers of the The Mandandanyi peoples welcomes all to his Country



Megan Brown of Chandra Yoga and Wellbeing, Roma, Queensland

Three of the MSS Sisters, Congregational Leader Stancea Vichie MSS, and H&B Board Members Bernadette Wallis MSS and Bernadette Madden MSS were able to attend. We were delighted also that our new Chair of the Highways and Byways Board, Marg Casey, and the chair of our Highways and Byways Toowoomba Branch Clare Smith were also able to attend. This program has been brought into being by much community consultation from local groups. We will keep you informed of the programs progress, especially on our website in Our Programs section

<https://highwaysandbyways.org.au/our-programs/>



Emeritus Bishop Bill Morris commissions Megan Brown and Jen Coggan as partners of Highways and Byways



Stancea Vichie mss planting the Seeds of Connection Coral Gum

Following the launch those who attended were invited to help plant a beautiful coral gum as a symbol of building "Seeds of Connection" across the community.

Thank you for your support of our programs and we look forward to staying in touch and letting you know of the outcomes of your generous donations.

Liz McAloon, Executive Officer

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



Garden brings life and hope to town scorched by years of drought

Thallon, Queensland



Thallon, in southwest Queensland, is famous for William, the hairy-nosed northern wombat sculpture in the main street, the nearby painted silos and the devastating drought. But it's the fledgling community garden in the school grounds that's stirring up interest these days. It could be one of the few green patches left in the small town as the drought drags into its seventh year.

The garden, a collaboration between community groups and the local school, was funded by Highways and Byways. A few garden beds of flowers, herbs and vegies might not seem like a big deal, but when everything around you is dying and the ground is parched, a patch of green can mean a lot. Most Thallon locals had to rely on harsh bore water for their gardens and very few survived. Fortunately, the primary school has access to river water.

Leanne Brosnan, a driving force behind the garden, said a lot of energy is being sucked out of the town, but a community garden will bring life and hope to the community.

Lots of groups, including the CWA and the Progress Association have put their energy, resources and person-power behind the garden.

Rain has finally come to the district, bringing much needed relief, but it will take extended periods of substantial falls to make the difference needed. However it has prompted the planting of winter vegetables and herbs in the garden.

Christine Allen, Principal at Thallon State School, said after a tough start to the year due to the drought and the school holidays, it was great to see the community involved, in particular the CWA members, working with the students as they planted recently.

Leanne hopes the garden will come to symbolise the hope that is strong in the community, despite the drought. It also gives older members of the community a chance to share their knowledge with the younger people.

"Down the track it would be great if the garden became a place where locals could get cuttings to restart their own gardens – when the drought finally breaks." Leanne said. "We know it will break one day."



New friendships discovered as sisterhood events take off

Peak Hill, New South Wales

Toni Clark thought she knew everyone in Peak Hill, but when she organised four Peak Hill 'Sisterhood' get-togethers in 2019 she forged friendships with locals she had never met, including one 90-year-old who she now calls her friend.

Creating new friendships was an experience shared by the forty plus women who attended the events, funded by Highways and Byways, to help locals nurture connections within the small town in central NSW.

Toni, on behalf of the Peak Hill Uniting Church Fellowship, gathered together a committee including several young local women to run the Sisterhood evenings.

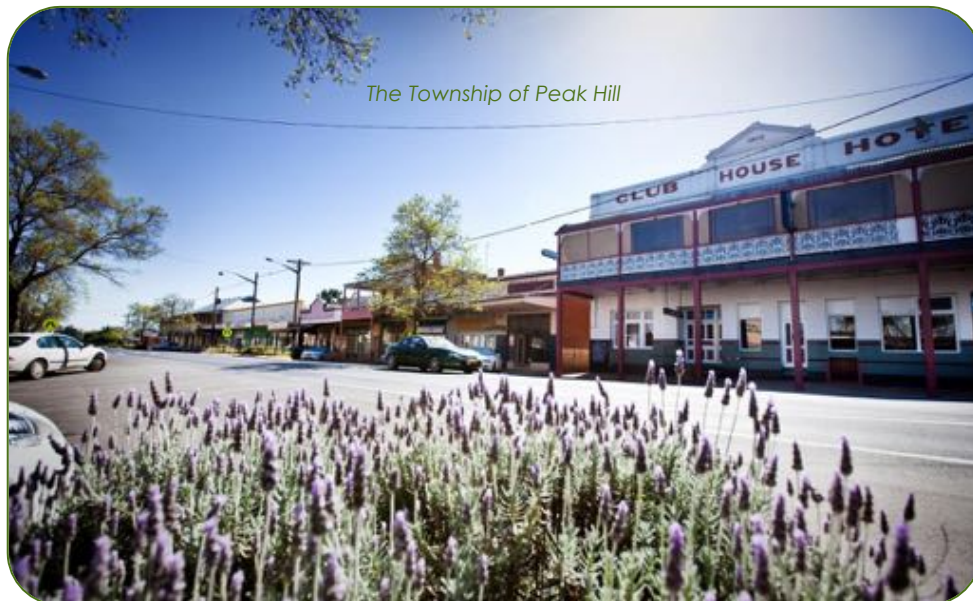
She said the younger planners were determined to make each night special, from decorating the local hall to providing gifts for the women who came along.

The Sisterhood evenings had themes of hands, new beginnings, what it means to be a woman and Christmas. Each of the day or evening events featured a lovely meal, a guest speaker and a gift or experience.

One of the events was a high tea, another one featured a woman talking about the work of her hands and that was followed by hand massages for all those present. Another evening featured a woman speaking about 'new beginnings' and each guest could pot up a succulent and take home. *Continued page 3*



The Township of Peak Hill



Resources and referral information, on issues raised at the evenings, were also available.

"Peak Hill is a small town with very few services. These gatherings brought people together, broke down barriers between the generations, created new friendships and networks and gave younger women the opportunity to create a very successful event," Toni said.

"I know a lot of new beginnings have come from it."

Prison ministry strives to give men and women a dignified new start

Port Pirie Diocese, South Australia



Most prisoners are released from the Port Augusta and Port Lincoln Prisons and the Cadell Training Centre carrying little more than a plastic bag of personal belongings. But the volunteers from the Port Pirie Diocesan prison ministry team (pictured) wanted them to be given something that showed care and support, in the form of a blue or pink cloth bag full of practical goodies.

Supported by Highways and Byways, the team distributed 80 bags to released prisoners in 2019. Each bag contained a pen and paper, \$10 phone card, \$20 Woolworths food card, hand towel and toiletries, including soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, disposable razor (for men), sanitary items (for women) deodorant, tissues and a comb.

Jenny Kondylas, a prison ministry team volunteer, said it is important to give a person leaving prison a more dignified start in the world.

"When a prisoner is released from the regional prisons they are given a plastic bag with the clothes they wore into prison. If they don't have independent transport, they are given a bus ticket. Some prisoners

may have to wait a whole day to get a bus to somewhere like Ceduna," Jenny said. "Now they can get something to eat, call someone and feel better before heading off to wherever they are going."

"We want to give prisoners more dignity and a sense of self-worth knowing that other people care. It may help to keep some people out of prison in the future, a real social justice initiative in the local Catholic community."

At first bags were purchased commercially, but last year, as part of their religion and social justice initiatives, students from Caritas College, in Port Augusta, made bags and collected toiletries from Woolworths and Coles.

Jenny hopes that each year students from one of the four colleges in the diocese will be invited to make the bags and help raise funds for the contents, which cost about \$50 each. Local businesses, parishes, members of the Catholic Women's League, and Knights of the Southern Cross have also donated goods and money.



Seasonal workers invited into community to party and worship

Longford, Tasmania



Longford locals didn't wait for seasonal workers to discover how friendly they were. They went to the workers and invited them to a community welcome party, supported by Highways and Byways. The workers from the nearby berry farms came in droves, embracing the food, music, and hospitality on offer.

The November party followed months of groundwork by parishioners from the Kings Meadows Parish in Longford. Weekend Mass numbers have increased from the low 20s to around 60 people as the workers, mostly from East Timor, join the community in prayer.

Parishioner Denise Talbot said the parish community has been rejuvenated. Translating some part of the Mass parts into Tetun and including some of their hymns, means the East Timorese people feel included. Once a month the parish holds a shared meal after evening Mass and that too is proving a hit, with the Timorese also bringing food.

"Some of the workers have been here for three berry picking seasons from November to May and they are starting to feel a part of the community," Denise said.

"We recently ran a drought and bushfire fundraiser in town and the East Timorese took up a collection, donating almost \$500. These people don't want to be given everything, they want to give back and be part of our lives here."

Denise said it was fitting that Highways and Byways had been so instrumental in the welcome party as the Missionary Sisters of Service had worked in the area for decades. She first met the Sisters when she was a young girl.

The welcome party attracted people beyond the parish and created connections between the locals and the seasonal workers from East Timor, Vanuatu and Tonga. Denise hopes it was the beginning of something that will go on for many years.

The town's initiative was recognised at the recent Australia Day celebrations.



Highways and Byways launches our new website!

In December 2019 we launched our beautiful new website. Many thanks for the hard work of our wonderful Communications and Fundraising Committee, and Bel Temby of Digital Services Lab who worked for months to create the technology to take us into the future and help people to connect with us.

Take a look:

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

Highways & Byways



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Book launches of Dear Mother Dear Father: Letters Home from Father John Corcoran Wallis 1927 - 1949

It's been an exciting time for the Missionary Sisters of Service (MSS) with several launches held for the new book by Bernadette Wallis MSS, *Dear Mother, Dear Father: Letters Home from John Corcoran Wallis 1927 - 1949*, in Brisbane and Toowoomba, Queensland, and in Melbourne, Victoria.

The first launch was particularly special as it took place in Yea, country Victoria, where Fr John, our founder, grew up. Fr John was born at the old Yea hospital and baptised in the Yea Sacred Heart Catholic Church in 1910. He grew up in Homewood, 10km from Yea and attended the local Homewood State school and later Sacred Heart School, the year it opened in 1923.

The Yea book launch took place at the local library on 11th February with more than 30 guests attending to commemorate Fr John, the young visionary man who founded the Missionary Sisters of Service in Tasmania in 1944. He became an influential and inspiring priest, who touched the hearts of many people along the way. The book was officially launched by local Yea man and friend of the Wallis family, Mr Frank Hargrave AO, who shared some of his favourite excerpts from various letters in the book. Prof. Gabrielle McMullen AM also provided some commentary at the launch.

Following the launch, Bernadette took a group of visitors on 'The John Wallis Heritage Trail', which allowed them to see significant historical sites related to John Wallis.

These included the site of the old Yea hospital and Sacred Heart Church to view the Baptismal register. They drove along the road where John rode his horse to the Homewood State primary school and visited Switzerland Road to see where John's mother, Emma Corcoran, grew up, and where the original ancestors settled in Yea.

The final destination was a visit to Pioneer Cemetery where Abraham and Emma Wallis are buried, as well as earlier family members.

Bernadette said: "John loved the land and the bush, and his rural upbringing influenced his interest in country people and their issues. Also having had three siblings who were profoundly Deaf, John had a special interest in people who lived on the edge of society. Inclusiveness was important to him."

She added: "John died in 2001 aged 91. He would be amazed at how the Missionary Sisters of Service have developed their legacy, Highways and Byways – A Community of Service, our mission organisation that aims to strengthen communities, supporting people experiencing hardship and disadvantage especially in rural Australia." For more information on the various launches and more photos, go to:

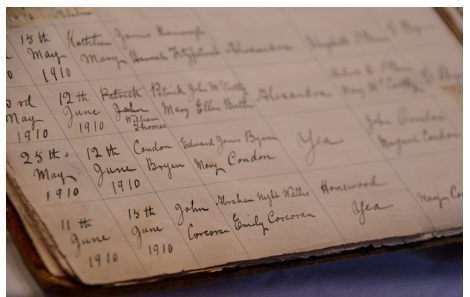
www.missionarysisters.org.au/news

Photo above: The now immensely improved and renovated home, which was once the Wallis family home, outside of Yea, Victoria.

Book Launch of Dear Mother Dear Father Yea Library, 11 February 2020



Photos clockwise from top left: Bernadette Wallis MSS, Carmel and Antony McCarthy of Yea; Prof. Gabrielle McMullen addressing the gathering; Yea locals at the launch; Amanda Freeman of Highways and Byways – A Community of Service, and the pilgrimage bus driver!; Bernadette Wallis MSS and MaryFran Coonan in Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Yea; Pilgrims at the gravesite of Emma and Abraham Wallis in Yea; Bernadette Madden MSS; Bernadette Wallis MSS signing books; Frank Hargrave AO of Yea, who officially launched the book, Stancea Vichie MSS, Mary O'Dea, Prof. Gabrielle McMullen AM. **Photos along bottom row, from left:** 'Wirrabong' the property name of the Wallis home outside Yea; Homewood Hall; The Baptism Record of John Corcoran Wallis at Sacred Heart Church, Yea.



Melbourne Book Launch of Dear Mother Dear Father

Catholic Theological College, 5 March 2020



Photo by Fiona Basile | MSS



Photo by Fiona Basile | MSS



Photo by Fiona Basile | MSS

Clockwise from top left:
 Stancea Vichie MSS, Kath Clune MSS, Bernadette Wallis MSS, Mary Healy; Hugh McGinlay of Coventry Press; audience at book launch; Sr Rosina Livingston RSM and Sr Helen Monkivitch RSM; Br Michael Godfrey, Sr Frances Baker RSM and Stancea Vichie MSS; Prof. Gabrielle McMullen AM officially launches the book; Brian Smiddy and John Hill CSSR: Pat Brain MSS and Marcia McMahon MSS. **Directly below:** Fr Kevin Lenahan, Master of Catholic Theological College.



Photo by Fiona Basile | MSS



Photo by Fiona Basile | MSS



Photo by Fiona Basile | MSS



Photo by Fiona Basile | MSS

Missionary Sisters Out and About

MSS Attending National Conferences

A number of our women, along with representatives from our Stewardship Council, and Highways and Byways – A Community of Service Board attended the national Catholic social services conference, Serving Communities with Courage and Compassion held in Melbourne, Victoria, between 26-28 February.

It is important that we attend such events to stay informed of national issues and news, particularly in the area of social services, where many of us are serving vulnerable people and communities. As a long-time member of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH), Stancea Vichie MSS also attended its national conference held in Sydney in mid-February. Themed 'Eliminating Human Trafficking – Here and Beyond', attendees were informed about human trafficking and slavery issues in Australia and discerned how ACRATH might best respond. It is a wonderful opportunity for members to experience solidarity with each other as plans are made for the year ahead. For more information, see:

www.acrath.org.au



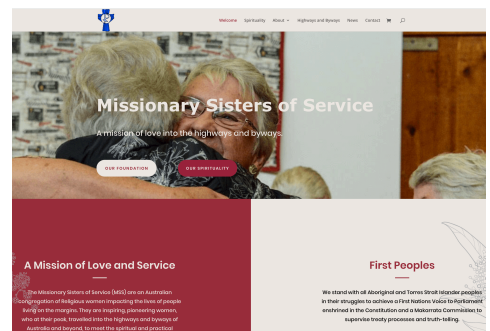
Above photo, from left: Prof. Gabrielle McMullen AM, MSS Stewardship Council; Stancea Vichie MSS, Congregational Leader; Donna Thompson, Highways and Byways Board Member; Bernadette Madden MSS; David Alcock, MSS Stewardship Council; Bernadette Wallis MSS; Fiona Basile, MSS Media and Communications.

Below photo: Stancea Vichie MSS (back row toward the right) among a sea of ACRATH member faces.



MSS' New Website in Development

We are excited to announce that we'll have a new website from Easter 2020. The website address stays the same – www.missionarysisters.org.au – but it'll feature a new 'look and feel', easy navigation tools, and the ability to keep up to date with our latest news, events and resources in a streamlined way. We look forward to launching this officially in coming weeks! A special thank you to Corrie van Den Bosch who has done so much work on the website over the years!



See all of the latest news and photos at: www.missionarysisters.org.au/news