



HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

A COMMUNITY OF SERVICE

Volume 53 No 2

August 2020

Newsletter

GREETINGS EVERYONE,

Welcome to our August newsletter with a new look in keeping with our website colours and style.

We hope you are staying well and that your communities are safe during this ever changing landscape of a global pandemic. We know that many of our friends and supporters live in rural and regional areas across Australia. It certainly is a time to appreciate the vastness of our country and the relative space we have compared to many parts of the world.

However, with the tower lockdown situation in Melbourne during July, we have seen how challenging it has been for many people here in urban areas to manage the pandemic in close proximity to each other with shared facilities. Such circumstances have been beautifully summed up in a poem penned by columnist and author Damian Barr – an ode to staying non-judgemental and being kind to each other.

Amongst the anxious, intense, sometimes divisive media coverage around Covid 19, his words touch a chord. *"We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat.....Let us not judge the one who lacks, as well as the one who exceeds him. We are on different ships looking to survive. Let everyone navigate their route with respect, empathy and responsibility."* Read the full poem with accompanying powerful image at republicworld.com.

2020 SMALL GRANTS UP AND RUNNING

As is usual at this time of year we are delighted to make public the projects funded through the 2020 Small Grants Program. (See enclosed Grants Summaries) We mentioned in the April newsletter that grant applicants went back to the drawing board and worked out ways to modify their projects in line with Covid 19 restrictions. Some wonderful projects have emerged..

Our theme in 2020 is *Nourishing Our Land and Our Communities*. This is a theme close to the hearts of the MSS who, as this edition of their newsletter mentions "have long had a deep connection with and respect for our land and its first peoples". Our country is still reeling from the loss of lives and biodiversity over our tragic summer. Our grants are testimony to small communities caring for land and each other in these restricted times.

As with 2019 grants, these projects are based in or near areas where the MSS have lived and worked over the last 76 years. We are excited to see these projects unfold and make a difference.

A WONDERFUL DONATION!

In June 2020 Highways and Byways received an unexpected and generous donation of \$125,000 for our grants and programs. *The House of The Gentle Bunyip*, a Not For Profit organisation based in Melbourne, wound up its assets and we were one of the fortunate beneficiaries. This has been a tremendous boost as we aim to grow our programs and establish longer term initiatives in rural Australia. Raising funds in times of uncertainty is hard and we are greatly appreciative of this gesture.



SEEDS OF CONNECTION 2020

ROMA, QUEENSLAND

Left: Megan Brown

Since March 2020, Megan Brown and Jenny Coggan who manage our Seeds of Connection program in Roma, have been busy adapting so that activities could run safely and still engage people, keeping them connected especially those who may not have as many opportunities as others to participate in community life.

Virtual cuppas were organised on Zoom, particularly helpful in the early stages of lockdown. Megan has been running online Yoga by Zoom and continues to do so – women who are isolated on properties are greatly valuing this. Seated Yoga classes have been run for sometime online and now back in person through the U3A in Roma. Megan's class is proving to be the most popular of all U3A classes.

Megan is also involved with other community organisations offering sessions for teenage girls addressing mental health and well-being.

AN INVITATION! FOOD FOR THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS FUNDRAISING DINNERS

Something we can safely do in times of a pandemic! Cook delicious meals for our family and (in some places) friends too, especially from our fabulous MSS Cookbook and raise some funds for Highways and Byways – see enclosed invitation.

We would love you to join us!

BUTTONS, BOWS AND CAKES

ULVERSTONE, TASMANIA

Word soon spread around Tasmania's West Ulverstone Primary School last year that a fun craft class was on after school and it kicked off with a scrumptious afternoon tea. But the biggest appeal for the students was the chance to create something with their parent, grandparent or carer.

New Mornings, a mental health service, partnered with the school and the Ulverstone Neighbourhood House to run the Buttons and Bows Project craft classes that also became a great introduction to mindfulness.

Mothers, grandmothers and carers were invited to come with their daughters to the craft sessions that were held for several weeks in the second half of 2019. A highlight of the program was the Christmas craft making where students and carers made tree decorations, bonbons and Christmas gifts.

Wendy Cunningham, who helped run some of the sessions and is also a volunteer with New Mornings, said the Buttons and Bows Project, with funding from Highways and Byways, increased community capacity and connections through sharing of traditional crafts and life skills between three generations of women in the area.



Buttons and Bows was an extension of New Mornings' SWIFT program, a family-focused trauma recovery program for families affected by family violence, child abuse and neglect who are living or attending school in West Ulverstone and surrounding areas. Skilled volunteers ran the sessions, which attracted children in the early primary years from vulnerable families.

"The craft sessions provided positive role models and helped extend everyone's social networks through the sharing of creative and life skills. These experiences can increase resilience and build personal capacity," Wendy said.

"The girls also experienced a great sense of achievement by making something with their parent or grandparent that was fun and stress-free in a very encouraging environment."

Wendy is encouraged to hear that one of the mums who participated in Buttons and Bows is now looking for funding to continue the project.

YOGA AND WELL BEING PROGRAM

PORT NEIL, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Lou McDonough remembers what it was like arriving in the small South Australian town of Port Neill with a new baby and no networks. She soon got to know people and is now a vital member of the community. She wants that for other young mums, especially those new to the town and those mums from surrounding farms. It was the reason she and a team of enthusiastic volunteers decided to get yoga classes going, with childcare provided.



A two-week well-bring program, supported by the Port Neill Progress Association and the local primary school, was built around daily yoga classes and supported by local shops and other services.

"We wanted the women and children in our community to learn techniques through yoga to relax and reduce stress and anxiety. It was also an opportunity for women from different generations to meet and form friendships, learn from each other and practise yoga," Lou said.

"Our school ran the crèche so that the mums could relax into the yoga knowing that their children were well cared for. We also had kids from the school and older ladies from the area which was great."

"There's been a drought here and the older women have been through it before and they know what these younger women are going through."



The project began as just yoga classes but Lou's enthusiasm meant it grew to embrace the town and included involvement from Mentally-Fit Eyre Peninsula. Students from the school painted well-being rocks and hid them around the town, bead-making classes were held and shops put signs up welcoming participants and offering support.

"People really loved it and it was terrific to see the yoga participants at morning tea, all gathering together to talk and the older women nursing the babies. Bringing people together can create such great networks."

SKIRTS, SHIRTS AND A JOEY POUCH DODGES FERRY, TASMANIA

Australian marsupials were some of the unlikely beneficiaries of the 'reloved and upcycled' sewing classes held at the Tasmanian seaside town of Dodges Ferry late last year. While the classes focused on teaching the women sewing skills needed to remake, remodel and upcycle clothing, the group also responded to calls during the summer to sew pouches for injured wildlife.

Natalie Siggins, who helped coordinate the classes at the Okines Community House, said the women who attended felt confident enough with what they had learnt to try their hand at making pouches for wildlife injured during the fierce summer bushfires.

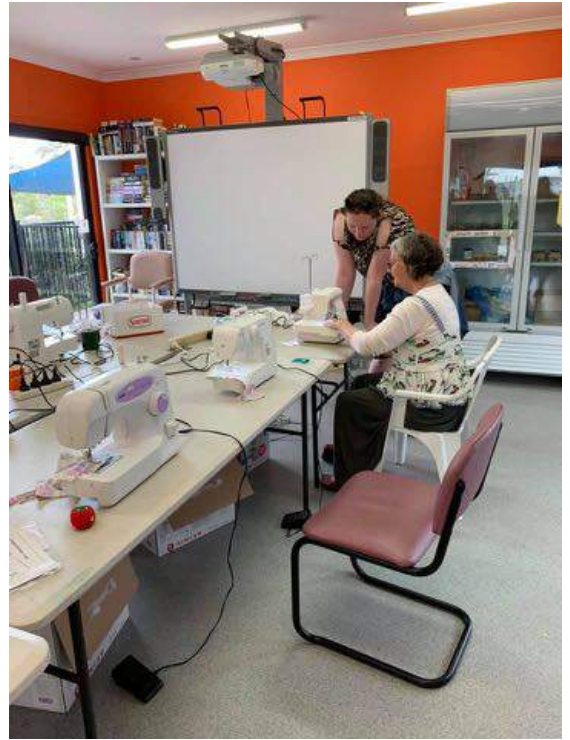
The classes focused on mending or remodeling clothes from local opportunity shops or clothes that might be destined for landfill, using skills that many people had never learned. Many of the women and their daughters who attended, brought along their own clothes to remodel and an overlocker, purchased with funding from Highways and Byways, made the finished garments look very professional.

Others made bags using old jeans. Some women, who owned their sewing machines, brought them along to better understand how to use them.



The final stage of the project was scheduled to start early this year, but has been postponed due to COVID-19. The very keen participants have already floated some suggestions to enhance their skills and interrupt the waste cycle.

"We have gathered a lot of clothes from opp shops that we have stored ready to work on, but we are also keen to learn to make rag rugs that uses scrap fabrics bound for landfill," Natalie said.



One of the best outcomes of the classes was a decision to make a day once a month when the sewing machines and overlockers are set up ready for anyone to come in and use.

The community house is situated right on the beach at Dodges Ferry with a spectacular view and a gorgeous community garden. What better way to come together, meet new people, build networks and remake clothes that might otherwise be thrown out.



GOOD FOOD AND HOSPITALITY

FEATURE ON THE MENU

WHYALLA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Margaret Surguy and the other fifty plus volunteers who run the Good Sam Inn dinner nights know the ingredients to a great meal are food and hospitality. They offer both to up to 60 people each Monday night at the former Good Samaritan Convent in Whyalla.

The free Monday night dinners, an initiative of the Whyalla Catholic Parish, started about four years ago when 10 people came along. Words soon got around that the two-course dinners, for people on low incomes, offered good food, a welcoming environment and a good pinch of compassion.

Margaret is in one of the seven teams of volunteers and says the night takes a bit of planning and food co-ordination. That's all been made a lot easier with a new refrigerator and barbecue bought with funding from Highways and Byways. Missionary Sister of Service Cheryle Thomson joins Margaret in her team every seven weeks. Most of the volunteers are from the parish, but others from the community, including Housing SA, have also become involved over the years.



"Most of us buy the food we cook each week and we also fundraise in the parish to buy meat and other costs that come up. In my team, which is mostly teachers from the local Samaritan College, one member enjoys cooking desserts so if its apple crumble on the menu, he will cook enough for fifty or sixty people," Margaret said.

Margaret knows that the people, some with mental health and drug problems, who come each week, love the food, but it's more than just a meal. They welcome the chance to come, sit down and enjoy an evening with other familiar faces, in a safe place.

Earlier in the year, due to COVID-19, the Monday night dinners went to take-away, which wasn't as popular with regulars.

Currently the volunteers have ceased serving even takeaways as both volunteers and those who receive the meals are vulnerable populations in terms of age and health. But Margaret, the other volunteers and diners are keen for the program to start up again. The Good Sam Inn Committee will meet in September to determine if it is safe to resume.

Sr Cheryle Thomson mss (right) with some of the wonderful, active Whyalla Parish members.



Left: Good Sam Inn Volunteers

"We don't like to miss a Monday night. We even put a dinner on when Christmas Day fell on a Monday because it means a lot to people who turn up," Margaret said.



HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS – A COMMUNITY OF SERVICE supports people and communities experiencing hardship and disadvantage, especially in rural Australia.

We do this through our annual grants program and longer term initiatives in small rural communities where we partner with a local organisation. Highways and Byways is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission.

Highways and Byways continues the vision and mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service and Father John Wallis.

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MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SERVICE

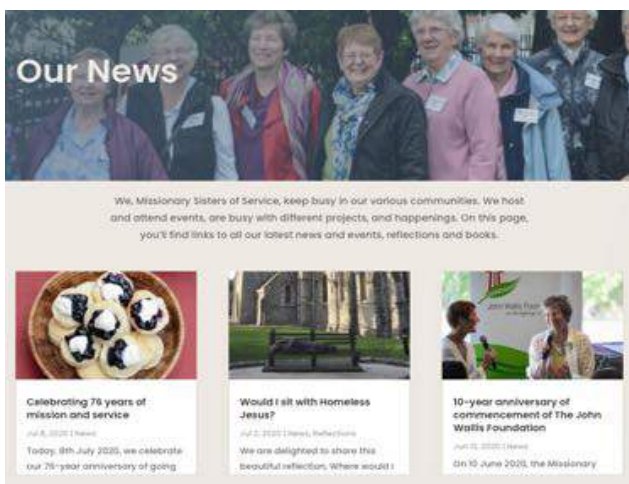
A mission of love and service into the highways and byways.

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MSS WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS KEEPING US INFORMED AND CONNECTED

The launch of our new website in April 2020 gave us much cause for celebration. Not only did we enhance the look and feel of our previous website, making it easier for people to find information and navigate from page to page, it has also become an important resource through which we can regularly update you with our [latest news](#) and events, and stories and photos from the past and present, including from our community of women and from the archives of our founder, Father John Wallis.



We are also regularly updating the 'Spirituality' page with reflections provided by some of our women, along with friends of our community. We are grateful to Penny Edman in Hobart, who has provided the latest reflection on sitting with the 'Homeless Jesus', and to Corrie van den Bosch MSS who has provided a number of reflections, including her latest one on the topic, *Nothing can ever be the same again; COVID-19 and the environment*.

In this piece, and given the current 'COVID' climate we find ourselves in, Corrie asks the question, "What is normal?" She writes: "When COVID-19 first started to feature in the media, I wondered: *Is this the Earth trying to tell us something about how we treat our environment?*" Indeed, this is something for all of us to ponder, particularly given Pope Francis' focus on the environment, and the role we play in looking after our common home. In fact, to celebrate the 5-year anniversary of Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si'*, which took place this year, he has initiated a year-long commemoration of the anniversary, which runs from 24 May 2020 – 24 May 2021.

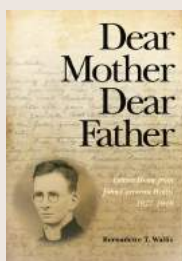
Our community of women have long had a deep connection with, and respect for our land, and its First Peoples. Throughout our 76 years of mission, we have traversed the land, both urban and rural, which has shaped us with its evolving presence. We continue to do what we can in our local communities to tread gently upon the Earth, to respect its resources wisely and to do what we can to help promote care and appreciation for our common home, and its people.

Reflections can be found at www.missionarysisters.org.au/spirituality



Some of our women are also engaging in a number of social media platforms to share our latest news and happenings – Facebook and Twitter. Facebook in particular seems to be the most popular form of interaction, with our Missionary Sisters of Service Page currently enjoying 230 'likes'. Each time we post something there is a flurry of likes and comments, which always bring much joy to those of us using this platform. When looking behind the scenes at the Facebook analytics, we can see that sometimes our posts reach into the hundreds, in terms of people who actually see the post on their Facebook account. This is wonderful! This tells us that Facebook is certainly proving to be a valuable way of sharing what's going on within our community of women, and in spreading our news far and wide! If you haven't already done so, please 'like' our [Facebook](#) page and also 'follow us' on [Twitter](#). We love receiving your comments!

Dear Mother Dear Father Letters Home from John Corcoran Wallis 1927 – 1949



Sadly, a couple of the scheduled book launches for Bernadette Wallis MSS's latest book, *Dear Mother Dear Father*, needed to be postponed due to Coronavirus. We're not sure when they'll take place again, so this is a reminder that there is plenty of information about the book and its

content on our website, including various news items about the launches that did manage to take place before the lockdowns across the country (look in the News section of our website, as well as the Father John section). This book, along with other books on offer, can now be purchased easily online (no need to download any order forms!)

How?

On the home page of the website you can scroll down until you see the various books on offer, or you can click on the 'Products' link at the top of the website. We now take secure, online payments.



Photo by Maureen Hickling MSS

Maureen Hickling MSS – sharing her love of, and care for all of Creation

Maureen Hickling was born in Stanthorpe, Queensland; her family lived on a fruit orchard at Wyberba. She went to a little one-teacher school with 15 other children, and then went onto secondary school in Toowoomba.

After three years as a lay Missionary in Madang, Papua New Guinea, she joined the Missionary Sisters of Service, aged 21. She has lived and worked in Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and Mackay, Royal Brisbane Hospital, and now Bribie Island in Queensland, where she has lived for more than 20 years.

Reflecting on her life of mission, Maureen says: “Each morning I rise before dawn, instinctively looking towards the East, to take in the newness and the colour of a brand new day in life.”

“Though challenged daily by Myalgia Encephalomyelitis (‘ME’), I have accepted and embraced this debilitating illness and am committed to reach out in service to others with what I can, where I can and when I can. As a bearer of hope, I pray that this may be transformed into service, care and compassion, with some laughter, joy and happiness along the way. Having to live with ME has gifted me with opportunities for prayer, contemplation and reflection – all central to my life tapestry.”

At the heart of mission for Maureen is “how Jesus worked with human hands, thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart.”

This is a constant source of hope.

In small ways, Maureen is part of, contributes to and supports the community and the environment, where she lives. She has been part of groups that monitor the local turtle population, the sea grass for the Dugongs, along with a cane toad project. Photography has also been one of Maureen’s hobbies for many years, where she captures a range of beautiful nature photographs, ranging from landscapes and seascapes at sunrise and sunset, to local wildlife and birds, and wildflowers (see above photograph of Maureen’s). Maureen makes cards with her photographs, which she sells to assist local groups.

She writes, “The natural environment here calls for help and recognition – turtle monitoring, toad busting, pelican lobbying, sand dune restoration, beach protection and more ... Photography reflects God’s magnificent creation. Moments celebrating the wonders of nature shared through my card making.”

“Gratitude fills my Heart for our collective years of loving service and faithfulness to God’s call. I am deeply grateful for the love and tenderness of friendships and the human journeys I have had the privilege to share in.”



To read Maureen’s full reflection, go to www.missionarysisters.org.au/spirituality