



HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

HEALING THE LAND - HEALING OURSELVES - TOGETHER

Newsletter

Volume 54 No 3
December 2021

GREETINGS EVERYONE,

Thank you for your support during 2021. It has been another tough year for so many people as COVID 19 has continued to impact our communities – large and small. We appreciate your ongoing commitment to help us bring support to rural communities.

We hope you enjoy reading about the wonderful impacts of Highways and Byways small grants featured in our December issue. Setting up composting systems on King Island in the Bass Strait, planting to restore native forest in WA, nesting box research in Vic and sharing Indigenous knowledge on fire in WA are just four examples of the diverse work in small rural communities who received a 2021 Highways and Byways grant.

HEALING THE LAND – HEALING OURSELVES – TOGETHER is our 2021 theme for the grants program. We have decided that we will continue this theme through to our 2022 grants program which has recently launched and we are currently receiving applications.

CONGRATULATIONS TODD DUDLEY

It has been a year of focus on our theme of healing the land. We were delighted to learn in November that Todd Dudley the Co-Ordinator of our partnership program in north east Tasmania *Restoring Nature and Communities* has been awarded the Australian Institute of Horticulture's Green Space Regional Award. AIH congratulated Todd for his commitment to promoting and supporting the restoration of nature and communities in Tasmania, along with his ongoing work alongside Highways and Byways. Great work Todd and well deserved!



Todd Dudley (2nd from right) with the team of workers (l-r) Scott Ryan, Mark Wallis, Dan Donaldson and Nathan Stevenson.

AROUND THE KITCEHN TABLE – A PLACE AND A VOICE FOR THE POOR

The 2021 John Wallis Memorial Lecture, was delivered by Dr Wayne Tinsey on Wednesday 27 October via Zoom as well as to a live audience of more than 60 people at the Don Bosco Creative Arts Centre, Guilford Young College, Glenorchy (Hobart) and live-streamed to an international audience.

Thank you to Wayne and congratulations to the Hobart Branch of Highways and Byways who hosted this inspiring evening!

Dr Wayne Tinsey is the Global Ambassador for Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders. Wayne has a long time commitment to helping educational leaders and young people experience and understand the lives of those who are marginalized, and for whom life is a heavy burden. Wayne spoke of stories of his time in both India and Peru and challenged us to take our inspiration from Jesus, Pope Francis and all who have committed their lives to the struggle for justice.



Enjoying supper after the memorial lecture are (l-r) Mary Williams, Jacqueline Hudson, Sr Lorraine Groves mss and Jill Smith.

CALL OUT FOR YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES!! **EARLY BIRDS GET A FREE COOKBOOK – FOOD FOR THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS!**

We are taking the big step of going paperless as much as we can. We figure we are not doing our part to heal and care for the land and environment with so much paper coming out of our office!

*In 2022 we will phase out our hard copy newsletter and the last edition will be December 2022. The newsletter will be delivered by email only from then on. Send us your email address **now** to mssadmin@missionarysisters.org.au with your full details – name and postal address, and if you are in the first 6 emails to arrive, a cook book will be delivered to your door!!*

HEALING THE LAND – HEALING OURSELVES - TOGETHER

Locals gather to renew their part of the world Busselton, WA

Folks around the Ludlow Tuart Forest in WA know that famed anthropologist Margaret Mead was right when she said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has”. They are a part of the change coming to large areas of degraded land in the forest.

More than 37 people gathered in July 2021 to plant more than 750 seedlings in a bid to regenerate land alongside a popular possum spotlighting trail in the Tuart Forest National Park used by locals and tourists. Parents brought their children, teenagers brought their passion for climate action and the elderly brought their commitment to ensuring generations after them get to enjoy the forest in the state’s South West.

Silke Rothkamm from the Busselton Dunsborough Environment Centre Inc. said the community tree-planting day, run with support from Highways and Byways, was important for the environment, but also for the well being of those involved.

“It fills people with hope when they are part of something that will lead to a beautiful area coming back to life. The world can be daunting and beautiful and it is healing to work alongside like-minded people on this sort of project,” Silke said.

Native trees, shrubs and ground covers were planted, including seedlings of the significant peppermint and tuart trees, which provide vital habitats for the endangered western ringtail possum and the threatened Carnaby’s black cockatoo.

During a break, participants listened to Wadandi Custodian Shannon (pictured opposite) and learned about Country including the traditional use of peppermint trees, the Noongar Season ‘Makuru’ (June – July), as well as the cultural significance of the region and the forest to the local Aboriginal people.

The regeneration project began in 2011 and has had wonderful results with large areas of degraded land now thriving with trees and shrubs up to two metres high. In addition to revegetation works alongside the trail, the Centre will tackle parts of the internationally-significant Vasse-Wonnerup wetlands, now choking with weeds.

“People valued this opportunity to connect with their local community and with the natural environment and to take positive environmental action and ownership,” Silke said.



THINGS ARE HOTTING UP IN LOCAL GARDEN Currie, King Island TAS

Waste not want not is the way things operate in Currie, the largest town on King Island in the Bass Strait. It's a practice made a little easier since the building of several timber compost boxes with support form Highways and Byways.

The compost boxes have been built at the King Island organic community garden, which is part of the Phoenix Community House, replacing rotting old compost boxes. Hot composting will be done in the new boxes instead of the traditional method, waiting three to four months for the compost to break down and be ready for use.

The 'hot' compost method has 'fast-tracked' the compost in Currie making it ready for people to use within a few weeks. The compost bins are not just great for producing nutrient-filled material for the



garden, they are also handy for locals who need to dispose of garden waste.

Sally Hanaveer manager of the Phoenix Community House said Wednesday is drop off day for locals, who then rely on a team of volunteers to put the garden waste into the compost heaps. Most of the compost, when ready, goes into the community plots, which are currently getting a make-over. During COVID, produce from the plots was used in hampers for locals who were struggling or isolated.

Once the old garden beds have been regenerated and have an irrigation system installed, more plots will be available for personal use. Sally said gardeners are challenged by the wind and hostile environment of Bass Strait and the sandy coastal soil, however the Community House was lucky to have Simone Stewart, a project officer who is also a trained horticulturalist.

"The hot composting project has been a real talking point in Currie and Simone ran workshops for locals and taught them all about hot composting. A lot of them left the workshop keen to set up their own systems at home for their personal gardens." Sally said.

"The community garden, which relies on the free compost, is about more than growing food. The garden creates opportunities for people to socialise. On Wednesdays we have a cuppa, cake and some time together."

FIRE WISDOM SHARED IN YARNING CIRCLE Gondwana Link, WA

Gorang Noongar Elder Eugene Eades and Ecologist Rod Safstrom, Coordinator of the *Friends of Nowanup had no KPIs or targets when they put together a fire workshop in August with colleagues from Bush Heritage Australia, the Albany campus of the University of Western Australia and Gondwana Link. But they had hopes, big hopes that they could bring people with differing perspectives together in meaningful conversations.

"The most important outcome from the workshop was creating a respectful space where everyone, including Indigenous elders and rangers, could talk. And people listened to each other." Rod said the Noongar led workshop - Kaarl Ngara: Cultural Burning Noongar Way, explored the role of managed fire at Nowanup and in central Gondwana Link landscape in southern WA.

The workshop provided an opportunity for each person to share their knowledge and perspectives of Noongar cultural approaches to fire, and ecological perspectives and threat abatement of fire in the ecosystems in the general areas of Nowanup, Corackerup and Peniup. The workshop started as a yarning circle around a fire in a large broom bush covered Mia Mia, using a talking piece from Country, which gave each participant an opportunity to share their knowledge and personal perspectives in their relationship with fire. Through sharing, relationships rather than outcomes developed. Later in the workshop the 37 participants including Noongar elders, leaders and rangers, local landholders and fire brigade representatives, government officials and Greening Australia, visited relevant sites.

"I get upset with some of the government department practices, but it's no use being angry. We have to listen to each other and work together, that's the only way to get anywhere," Rod said.

Rod said there had been many positive outcomes from the workshop, the main one being a desire by all those present to work together to learn and share more and develop some on the ground actions.

"There is a commitment to keep working together to create opportunities for cultural burning to take place and form an important part of fire and conservation management in the region," Rod said.

*Friends of Nowanup <https://nowanup.country/>



WILDLIFE WELCOMED BACK AFTER BUSHFIRES DESTROYED 'HOLLOW' HOMES

Cardinia, VIC

Lindsay McNaught hopes to see ringtail possums and eastern rosellas nest in the new accommodation that is being set up on his farm and on 22 nearby properties. It won't be as good as the hollows in old eucalypts, but it's a start. Hundreds of old hollow bearing eucalypts, the habitat of much indigenous wildlife, were burnt during the 2019 bushfires that tore through properties in the Tonimbuk, Bunyip North, Garfield North and Tynong North areas.

About 540 nesting boxes with GPS locations, built by local volunteers, school students and Men's Sheds, are being set up on private properties and in the Mt Cannibal Nature Conservation Reserve, badly affected by the fires. It is hoped birds and animals, including parrots and ring-tailed possums will nest in the boxes. Any nesting activities will be captured with a camera on a pole, bought with funding from Highways and Byways. The data will then be recorded and analysed over the next three to four years.

Lindsay who is President of Cardinia Environment Coalition said the data collected by a funded project officer would create a picture of how native birds and animals recovered after a major bushfire. He said the information will show that the nesting boxes were used by native species, feral animals or not at all.

He hopes to see possums and birds use the nesting boxes, after the last of his remaining old eucalypts fell over during the recent wind-storms. His tree hollows hosted ringtail possums, birds and sugar gliders.

The eight different types of nesting boxes, will be inspected during the breeding seasons and also in response to activities reported by property owners. Photographs will be taken of any nesting box 'users'.

As well as recording important information, the nesting box project has also been a boost for the local communities, particularly for the property owners and the many nest box builders, including children. They have been involved in the project, discovering the wildlife that was lost during the fires and hopeful of the return of many birds and animals.

Everyone involved and anyone else who wants it will receive the report in a few years.



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 local organisations. 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 their founder 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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TAKING TIME TO REFLECT AT YEAR'S END

As another year draws to a close, we are mindful of the enduring impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on so many lives. We continue to walk alongside those in our midst and hold in prayer all those who have been impacted, whether it be by prolonged isolation or immobility, or ill-health, loss of income and livelihood. It really has been a big year. We've lost three of our Sisters – Margaret Kenny in January, Carmel Hall in July and more recently, Maureen Hickling who died on 15 October 2021 (see more on the final page). Our hope for this coming Advent and Christmas, is that we can take time to draw close to the loving God who dwells within each of us and all of Creation. May this Christmas and holiday season be filled with rest and renewal, and the promise of Christ.

SEASON OF CREATION 'PAUSES'

Within the Christian faith tradition, the Season of Creation is from 1 September to 4 October, the feast day of St Francis of Assisi. It is a time to focus our prayers and energy on care for the Earth and all of creation. To mark this season, the MSS together with Highways and Byways – A Community of Service and the Carmelite Centre Eco Spirituality Reading Group, hosted a series of Sunday afternoon 'Pauses'.

'The idea of the "Pause" is based on the Sabbath, day seven of the Creation story of Genesis 1. Sabbath is a day to stop and admire the work of creation,' said Corrie van den Bosch MSS, who was one of the team members leading the

reflection each Sunday (held on September 5, 12, 19, 26 and October 3). There were more than 180 registrations overall, though not everyone could make it each time.

Reflecting on the Pauses, Corrie said, 'In week one, Evelyn Diradji took us to the Cosmos, our home. She connected us to the original creative impulse expressed in each new blossom, in each drop of rain, in every new-born life, and so much else. In Pause two, Gail Pritchard invited us to the "Council of Beings" in which we listened to the turtles and all ocean creatures speak about their concerns of rising sea temperatures, *Birrarung* (the Yarra) shared her concerns from the perspective of rivers and all of Earth's water systems, and finally the forest spoke about the importance of forests for the wellbeing of the Earth. In Pause three, we had an amazing session presented by Sherry Balcombe, Manager of Aboriginal Catholic Ministry Victoria who shared the wisdom of Aboriginal spirituality and its integral embeddedness in the whole of creation. In Pause 4, we were taken into the beauty and the crisis and the urgency of caring for Earth and all its systems, evoking a love for creation because we will not save what we do not love.'

In the final pause, Corrie invited participants into the 'Sabbath Pause': *God saw all God had created and indeed, it was very good.* Beginning with a short video of Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann's *Dadirri*, participants breathed in the rhythms of the Cosmos. The writings of Cynthia Bourgeault were also reflected upon: *The divine qualities of love, mercy, compassion, creativity, justice, goodness and beauty seek new stream beds to flow through the entire Cosmos. Our vocation as human beings is, as alchemists and artists, to live those divine qualities streaming into our world in our relationship with every being.* Each Pause presentation included or was followed by some time for quiet reflection, after which participants met in small groups to share their reflection with one another. The Pauses concluded with a short prayer, blessings or song.

Read the full story and access further resources at www.missionarysisters.org.au/news



Photo courtesy Fiona Basile.

MSS JOIN IN 'ONE HEART MANY VOICES' NATIONAL CONFERENCE

The MSS were pleased to be part of the *Mission - One Heart Many Voices* national conference hosted by Catholic Religious Australia and Catholic Mission from 1-3 September. Held online, the conference presented a wide range of inspiring and informative presenters who shared their thoughts, reflections, actions and ideas on current issues in the Church, and providing possible ways forward in living out, and sharing the joy of the Gospel in the world today.



MSS Congregational leader, Stancea Vichie and Bernadette Wallis MSS attended the sessions. Speaking about the importance of attending the conference, which is the fifth to date, Stancea said, 'Mission is at the heart of who we are as Missionary Sisters of Service and it is important to join with the 500 other people who come to the conference each time and who are also on mission in the world. It is a mission that is expressed in such diverse ways, hence the title of the conference – *Mission: One Heart Many Voices*. It is a time for us to meet new and familiar faces, make connections, encourage and support one another as we seek to live out the Gospel in the world today. My hope is that people of the Church community will always look beyond to the peripheries of society to hear the voices of those most alienated, this includes creation.'

Supporting these sentiments, Bernadette Wallis MSS said, 'The Mission Conference offers the opportunity to be part of the bigger picture of the mission, God's mission in Australia and in the world. Keynote speakers pick up the relevant and significant issues of the day and point to future directions. Their presentations can challenge and inspire, educate us, give hope and situate us in the middle of what may seem to be chaos and on the edge; they take us further and it is where life shines.

'The workshops and presentations at the mission conference are like a sparkling diamond, shining light on multi-faceted good works, where you see individuals and groups filled with passion as they share good news of what they are doing, explaining the reality of the issues they see. They arise above despair and hopelessness, and show gospel approaches, attitudes and ways to respond. We can celebrate this.'

MSS PARTICIPATE IN FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NATIONAL PLENARY COUNCIL



Our congregational leader, Stancea Vichie MSS, is one of the 280 members participating in the national Plenary Council discerning the question, *What is God asking of us in Australia at this time?* The first of two general assemblies was held online from 3-10 October. The second will be held from 4-9 July 2022.

In an online podcast interview and news article (see link below), Stancea shared that she was particularly moved by the Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country on the opening day. 'It was beautifully done. What struck me ... it wasn't paved over, "everything's lovely". In the visuals, some of the very painful things that have happened to Indigenous Peoples were presented – dispossession of their cultures, languages, land and so much else. But in saying that, it also presented the very strong resilience of Indigenous peoples in this country, which I was pleased to see; the consciousness and awareness of the deeper history of this land has really developed as the years are going by.'

[Read the full story: www.melbournecatholic.org/news/integrating-indigenous-spirituality-a-focus-of-the-plenary-council](http://www.melbournecatholic.org/news/integrating-indigenous-spirituality-a-focus-of-the-plenary-council)

CHERYLE THOMSON MSS, A CONTINUED PRESENCE OF LOVE

In celebration of Cheryle Thomson MSS's life, ministry and 'official retirement', about 70 people from the Catholic parish of Whyalla, South Australia, gathered for a celebration lunch in recent months. People from across the Diocese of Port Pirie have known Cheryle for more than three decades (Cheryle is originally from Port Pirie and returned to work in the diocese three decades ago).

Celebrating her life of service at the Whyalla Football Club, it was noted that Cheryle is the longest serving MSS in the diocese and has been pastoral associate in the parish in Whyalla since 2002.

Parishioners reflected on Cheryle's time indicating that they were very blessed to have had her working in their parish for the last 20-plus years.

Cheryle is a strong advocate for justice and spent many years lobbying with many others to draw attention to the injustices of people in detention. She is a voice for those who need help and assistance and has been a great support to many single-parent families and aged and disabled parishioners and family members.

At the celebration, Cheryle shared some of her precious memories from her time at the parish and the Diocese. They included the regular visits to Baxter Detention Centre, lay-lead liturgies in the absence of a priest, especially in Whyalla when the local priest, Fr Tony Redden was ill, and the amalgamation of the two Whyalla parishes.

Cheryle has been significantly involved with the RCIA program each Easter during her years at the parish.

She has attended many family celebrations, many funerals, and had regularly made visits to the hospital and aged care homes. Supporting families is something she holds particularly close to her heart.

Though Cheryle's work with the parish has ended formally, she will stay on in Whyalla and remain involved in the lives of the people there, along with continuing some volunteering roles within the parish. She said, 'Over the last six years I have had some health issues and feel it is time to take life a little easier without too many responsibilities. As a Missionary Sister of Service, I am still a pastoral presence and a volunteer in the parish. I am not about to sit around and do nothing!'



Cheryle Thomson MSS being presented flowers from Rebecca Sinclair of Samaritan College, Whyalla.



Cheryle with Rita and Brian Howard.



Cheryle with Pam Molyneux. Photos on this page courtesy of Anne Rosewarne.

Read the full story and see many more photos at: www.missionarysisters.org.au/News
A reminder that we also have the MSS Facebook page, which we regularly update with latest news, events and photographs. Follow and 'Like' us at: www.facebook.com/MissionarySistersServiceAus

Vale Maureen Hickling, 1954 - 2021

Maureen Hickling MSS died on 15 October at Palm Lake Care, Beachmere in Queensland. Her funeral was held in The Little Flower Church, Bongaree on Bribie Island in Queensland on 21 October.

We're so grateful to the people of Motor Neurone Disease Queensland, family and all of Maureen's friends on Bribie Island. Maureen 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 on to 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. Maureen lived and worked in Tasmania, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland. Living on Bribie Island for many years Maureen was very interested in supporting the local community and care of the environment. She had been part of groups that monitor the local turtle population, the sea grass for the Dugongs and a cane toad project. Photography had been her hobby with her inspiration ranging from sunrise to sunset, to the local wildlife, birds and wildflowers. Her brother Neil gave a beautiful tribute at the funeral, which can still be watched via the MSS website, in the News section.



Pat Quinn MSS reflects on Maureen's life

When I visited Maureen at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (in March 2020), she had just been diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. She was told she had six months to live, but it was 18 months till her death. Maureen was totally accepting of her pending death, saying, 'bring it on'. She had prepared her funeral ritual and showed it to me as a printed booklet.

During other visits her physical deterioration was obvious, but her spirit was alive – her love of nature, her love for God, her appreciation of those around her were always so evident. Some of our Toowoomba MSS visited her just five days before her death. It was a privilege for four of us to honour her, her family and her local community at her funeral on 21 October.

Maureen was much loved by the people of Bribie Island. When we visited her close friend Von Wood, she spoke of Maureen's outreach to the destitute, the grieving and to anyone needing support. Her compassionate heart touched many people in the 20-plus years living on the island. This love also embraced all of nature. Maureen connected with others caring for the environment. So many of her photos captured the beauty of all things. I feel blessed to have known Maureen.

Photos from top: Maureen and friend monitoring sea grass; Standing from left: Bernadette Wallis MSS, Maureen Hickling MSS, Mary Cleary MSS. Seated: Nancy Doyle MSS and Cecilia Bailey MSS; one of Maureen's seascapes. Top right: Maureen Hickling MSS. Photos courtesy MSS Archives.