



Missionary Sisters of Service

A MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

NEWSLETTER

Volume 56 No 3 | December 2023

MSS to celebrate 80-year anniversary of foundation in 2024

In 2024, our community of women, the Missionary Sisters of Service, together with many of you who've been part of our journey, will celebrate our 80-year anniversary of foundation. This is such a wonderful occasion, as we once again take time to reflect on our history and celebrate and give thanks for how far we've come as a community. We continue to marvel at the foresight of our community's young founder, Fr John Wallis, and the courageous women who said 'yes' in Launceston, Tasmania, all those years ago. Our official foundation day is 8 July 1944. Next year, we hope to celebrate within our local communities where the sisters currently live—Melbourne, Victoria; Hobart, Tasmania; Toowoomba, Queensland; and Port Pirie, South Australia. We'll be sure to keep you posted via our website and Facebook page – www.missionarysisters.org.au and www.facebook.com.au/MissionarySistersServiceAus



Congratulations to Lorraine Groves MSS, awarded Guildford Young Medal for Service to Community in Tasmania

We're so pleased to share that Lorraine Groves MSS was among a group of nine people who were awarded the Guildford Young Medal at St Mary's Catholic Cathedral in Hobart, Tasmania, last month. The award recognises those who have made a substantial contribution to the mission of the Church in Tasmania. On his Facebook post, Archbishop Julian Porteus said of the recipients: 'Our parishes and the Archdiocese of Hobart as a whole are able to fulfil our mission because people willingly use their gifts for the upbuilding of the parish or the archdiocese. Content to offer their time and talents for the common good, and willing to give freely of themselves, assisting where they have seen a need, they have served quietly, steadily and happily, seeking no recognition or thanks.'

Congratulations Lorraine! We all rejoice with you and thank you for your faithful commitment to so many people over many years, especially as you have so often reached out to the most forgotten people. Our good wishes go with you for the years ahead.



Photo source: Archdiocese of Hobart

Save the date! MSS and Highways and Byways Bruny Island Pilgrimage 2024

Tasmania's Bruny Island, on Nuenonne Country, is historically significant to the MSS. It's the place where our story begins. It was on Bruny Island that our founder, Fr John Wallis, first heard the call of a mother, Mrs Kit Hawkins, who asked: 'Who is looking after us in the bush?' And so, Bruny Island has become a special place of pilgrimage for all involved with the MSS and Highways and Byways.

In 2024, we mark the MSS's 80th year since foundation, so we're hosting yet another MSS-Highways and Byways Bruny Island pilgrimage for those who are interested between **Thursday 21 November to Monday 25 November 2024**. Participants walk the land and get in touch with the places that have significance to our mission. Using Captain Cook Caravan Park at Adventure Bay as our base, each morning we meet for a reflection and then head off on walks (of varying levels of fitness) in areas of particular interest and importance to our story. We meet again in the late afternoon each day for a time of sharing stories and reflections. On Sunday, we join the local community in Alonnah for their monthly Mass.

Reflecting on the 2022 Bruny Island pilgrimage, congregational leader, Stancea Vichie MSS, said: *Being on the land of the Nuenonne people, being present to the spirit of what has happened since 1933; the dream of John Wallis, and eleven years later, the MSS coming into being ... then 66 years of the story of these women working across this country, and then the formation of the John Wallis Foundation, which then became Highways and Byways. It was wonderful to see the way that the original mission of the MSS is being expressed now; reaching out into so many parts of this country; healing land and communities together, and then, having all of us who are part of this journey in a very explicit sort of way, come together on this special island. It's just so profound and wonderful.*

For anyone interested in joining the 2024 Bruny Island pilgrimage, please email Bern Madden at bernden16@gmail.com or call 0408 505 387.



Photos from the 2022 Bruny Island pilgrimage by Fiona Basile

Update on Emerging Futures Collaborative

It has been nearly four years since the establishment of Emerging Futures Collaborative (EFCL) began serving religious institutions in transition, providing support for shared services, and where needed, a Canonical Delegate.

Our community was one of the first to commence the transition process, along with two other religious communities. Now, there are 20 religious congregations who are in various stages of transition, receiving support through EFCL.

In early November 2023, EFCL hosted a zoom in which 200 people from religious communities from across Australia registered to participate. The zoom provided a platform for updates and sharing of information. It's encouraging to see that more and more congregations are coming on board.

For more information about EFCL including great articles, videos and other resources, see:

www.emergingfuturescollaborative.org.au

Pope Francis' *Laudate Deum*

Following *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis has now released his latest apostolic exhortation, *Laudate Deum*, which he addresses to 'all people of good will on the climate crisis'. The MSS have always advocated for working alongside *all people* of good will, particularly in our lives and through the work of our mission entity, Highways and Byways, Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves, Together. We remain committed to caring for people, the land, and all of Creation, in all that we do. Given the pressing nature of the damage to our natural world, we encourage all to read the apostolic exhortation.

Cheryle enjoying a new home in Port Pirie, South Australia

Having left her hometown of Port Pirie, South Australia, 50 years ago, Cheryle Thomson MSS has now moved back. Cheryle will celebrate her 50-year anniversary next month having joined the MSS in January 1974, aged 23-years. As a Missionary Sister of Service, Cheryle spent around five years in Hobart, Tasmania; two years in Toowoomba, Queensland; eight years in Parkes, New South Wales and then 33 years in Whyalla, South Australia. With Cheryle's move to Port Pirie, this ends 52.5 years of our MSS base in Whyalla.

Cheryle moved back to her hometown to be closer to family and friends. It's also only 2.5 hours by bus to Adelaide, and closer to essential services. Cheryle acknowledges that she was sad leaving the many people she's known and worked with over those many years, and from so many places. But reflecting further, she is happy to 'come back home to reconnect with those who live in Port Pirie and surrounds'. She says, 'the move took a lot of hard work, but I'm very happy in my new home. This was the right thing to do. It's a lovely home and I feel really blessed.'

Cheryle has already met a lot of people and is looking forward to getting involved in a small way in the local parish and community, once she's recovered from the big move.



Cheryle in her new kitchen, in Port Pirie, SA



Kath Clune MSS features in book making older women visible

Kath Clune MSS features in a book by Dr Maggie Kirkman, titled *Times of Our Lives: Celebrating Older Women*. Dr Kirkman interviewed Kath a couple of times for the book, which aims to pose this challenge: to see old age as an opportunity to continue learning rather than a dreaded tragedy. Kath says, 'It's about making older women visible, the quiet achievers, with a chapter focussing on each of the 20 women highlighted.'

The book was released in March this year, with a chapter about Kath titled, 'Adventure and Service', which she thinks fits her 'comfortably'. It focuses on her life before joining the MSS, and then her various ministries as MSS. It highlights a peak experience in Kath's life when she enrolled in a nursing degree in her late 50s. Kath topped the State in advanced enrolled nursing, which she puts down to her 'life experience'. Kath's nursing work took place at psychiatric hospitals and the Sacred Heart Hospice in Darlinghurst, where she cared for patients with AIDS.

Kath retired when she was 78 but now at 85 and living in Clayton, Victoria, is still active within her local community. She volunteers at the local Anglican Church and local library teaching English to migrants, and at the St Kilda Repair cafe, where volunteers fix things that need mending. And you can often find Kath enjoying U3A courses and day trips with fellow MSS. Reflecting on the book, Kath hopes it will 'dispel some of the ageism in society and reveal the richness of older women's lives'.

Time of Our Lives Celebrating Older Women



Maggie Kirkman

'A must-read for all those women who refuse to go gentle into that good night.'
Maxine McKew

MSS pledge unwavering commitment to the path of healing and unity

We, the Missionary Sisters of Service, acknowledge that our work and our homes are on the sacred land and waterways of the many cultural groups of the First Nations peoples of Australia.

In light of the recent referendum result on Constitutional Recognition and the establishment of a Voice to Parliament, we acknowledge the deep disappointment and sadness of those who were hoping for a positive result, particularly our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers. It is a regret shared by many within our own community, at this time.

To our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers,



Logo source: www.indigenousvoice.church

We acknowledge that following the referendum result, we were led wisely by some of the Elders to enter into a time of silence. We acknowledge your grief in a particular way and continue to hold you all in prayer.

We thank you for your invitation to listen to your voices, and to do so with open hearts and minds. We hope to continue to learn from your 65,000-year-old presence in this land as the oldest continuing culture on earth and work together towards a future where we may better understand our connection to this sacred land we live on, and let that reverberate through our presence, our words, and our actions.

Our community of women, who have travelled across this vast land for the past 80 years, have been formed by the land. The Spirit and beauty of the land has been imbued within each one of us. We are grateful for what we have experienced and continue to learn from you, particularly through the relationships formed between our sisters and many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

Though we are less mobile in our older years, we remain connected with you where we can in our local communities, and certainly through our mission entity, Highways and Byways: Healing Ourselves, Healing the Land, Together. Through its Small Grants Programs in many parts of Australia and its work with Mithaka woman Megan Brown, through the Seeds of Connection program in Roma and beyond in Queensland, they are together developing important partnerships.

At this time, conscious of the work that lays ahead, we reaffirm our commitment to standing with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We accept the ongoing invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together with you in a spirit that encompasses voice, treaty, and truth-telling to ensure a better future for all.

We feel truly blessed to walk beside you and trust we will grow stronger as we continue this walk together toward healing, and unity.

Stay up to date with MSS news and contact details

For more information and news about the Missionary Sisters of Service, we encourage you to visit our website – www.missionarysisters.org.au – particularly the News section (follow the tabs at the top)

We also have a Facebook Page – www.facebook.org.au/MissionarySistersServiceAus

An electronic copy of our newsletter is also available. Please email newsletter@hb.org.au indicating your desire to subscribe to the MSS eNewsletter.

For any enquiries related to the MSS, email coordinator@missionarysisters.org.au