



HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

HEALING THE LAND HEALING OURSELVES TOGETHER

Newsletter

Volume 55 No 1
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FAREWELL TO LIZ

On the 28th February 2022 I worked my final day in the role of Executive Officer of Highways and Byways. I walked into the office for the first time on 28th October 2013. It is time to move on after eight years and four months to the exact day! And to welcome a new generation of leadership into this wonderful organisation.

When I began with the John Wallis Foundation, the role was for one day a week. Over the years, along with the board, we have had the joys and challenges of growing the organisation each year from a few small projects in the early days to a broad range of community initiatives which proudly live out the mission of the Missionary Sisters of Service particularly in rural Australia.

The wise counsel and stewardship of the MSS has been invaluable to me. I have shared an office with Corrie van den Bosch, Bernadette Wallis and Stancea Vichie over the years. We've shared many dreams, plans and ideas, nattered out challenges, inspired each other, and always had time for stories, laughs and cake! In fact my relationship with each and every one of the MSS across Australia has benefited my work as Executive Officer in so many ways.

I have certainly encountered some challenges along the way, particularly our quest to become a public benevolent institution to accurately reflect the work of the Sisters since 1944 and for the benefit of our donors now and into the future. We were successful in 2018 and this resulted in the creation of Highways and Byways, transitioning our work from the John Wallis Foundation.

The highlights for me are almost too many to mention, but one which stands out has been the privilege to meet and spend time with inspirational people. Travelling to Tasmania, Queensland and South Australia with Sr Carol Zinn ssj during the series of 2015 John Wallis Memorial lectures was one such cherished time. Carol's conviction that relationship lies at the heart of both social justice and care for the Earth is utterly aligned with the mission of the MSS, and one which I also hold deeply.

Which brings me to what I will miss most as I head off to other challenges and adventures. I will miss all the wonderful relationships with each and every one of the Highways and Byways community – Board, Staff, Stewardship Council, Branches, Volunteers and Friends of Highways and Byways. You have all helped shape H&B into what it is today, and I am honoured to have a place in the story. I wish Jane all the very best as the next story unfolds

Liz McAloon



WELCOME TO JANE

A big thanks to Liz for making my transition into Highways and Byways as smooth as possible. Liz has achieved so much over the past eight years – her development and growth of Highways and Byways is inspiring and such a gift to the MSS, ensuring their legacy has grown wonderful roots for a wonderful future!

I have been fortunate to meet with many of the Melbourne MSS since starting in January, and have met many of the sisters in Toowoomba, Hobart and Whyalla over Zoom and the phone. I can't wait to travel interstate to see everyone in person!

Inspired by the spirit of these amazing women, I am excited to do everything I can to help Highways and Byways thrive, finding ways to support as many small communities as we can who are wanting to strengthen their connections to each other and the land they are living on. Our mission to *Heal the Land, Heal Ourselves, Together* really encapsulates that deep ground-roots respect that the sisters have always shown to the people, and offers a wise way forward for all of us as we strive to make meaningful change in the world around us.

Jane Collopy

CALL OUT FOR YOUR EMAIL ADDRESSES

To ensure you continue receiving our newsletter, please send us your email address! Call or email us at newsletter@highwaysandbywaysltd.org.au

The e-newsletter allows us to do some exciting things which are not possible in a mail version, like videos of the sisters, short video clips of some of our projects and enable you to give us immediate feedback easily. You'll also be able to share articles easily with others who might be interested.

In 2022 we will phase out our hard copy newsletter and the last edition will be December 2022. The newsletter will then be delivered by email only.



RANGERS RESTORE NATURAL GROWTH & BIRD HABITAT ARCHER POINT QLD

The coastal area around Archer Point near Cooktown in Queensland was once a beautiful spot for people to visit and wildlife to inhabit. Lyall Naylor and rangers from the Yuku Baja Muliku Indigenous Ranger Group believe it can be once again.

The rangers, with support from Highways and Byways, have tackled out-of-control invasive weeds and dense growth along a large area of the degraded Archer Point coastline in a bid to stabilize the sand dunes of two coastal areas and restore the natural vegetation.

Lyall said the area is overgrown with vegetation as a result of unregulated access by visitors and campers, tidal vegetation and the loss of natural vegetation cut by campers for fires. The first step was to build fencing; a wind break along the 80 metres of land separating the bush from the sand.

Then came the detective work by Lyall with help from the Queensland Herbarium.

"I went through the list of historical plant collections to get a good insight into what might have grown in that area. We wanted to ensure that what we planted was as close as possible to what once grew there before the introduction of invasive weeds. We did a lot of our own seed collection and development," Lyall said. "We also included Indigenous bush foods so that when we have walking tours the rangers can share information about Indigenous life and history in that area."

Rangers planted 156 trees including eucalypts, She Oaks, wattles, bloodwoods, Moreton Bay Ash, red beech, cheese fruit and ribbon grasses.

These trees and grasses will provide food plants for wildlife and shelter grasses for shore birds and

insects and improve the conditions for international migratory birds. Lyall hopes that birds will 'help' the rangers' work by carrying seeds and spreading the grasses.

"There is a tension managing what people want from the area and protecting the site. Day visitors will be restricted to one area. It's really the only way to manage the site for the future," Lyall said.



START LOCAL THEN GO GLOBAL GOODWOOD QLD

Ask kids around the bundaberg region what should be done to protect the environment and they'll point you in the right direction. Stop buying too much, stop throwing it away and look after where you live.

These are a few of the messages school children from Goodwood Primary School in Queensland conveyed to hundreds of people who came to the Childers Festival last year. The children developed their ideas during workshops at their local primary school in a project supported by Highways and Byways.

The project, run by Creative Regions, sought to educate children about protecting their environment. Traditional Cultural Deliverer, Byron Broome of the Taribelang Cultural Aboriginal Corporation, gave a talk about sustainable, cultural practices in the bush. Wendy Zunker, Creative Producer, said she was delighted to discover that the primary school had their own Yarning Circle and that the students were very familiar with sustainable practices in their local area.

Following Byron's talk and demonstration using traditional fire sticks, students participated in a stop-motion animation workshop developing ideas to protect their local environment. Their ideas, and those from a community workshop, were then displayed at the annual *Childers Festival* as part of the Light up the Park evening. Their work was also shown in nearby Woodgate at *Music on the Esplanade*, which was a highlight of the *Woodgate Arts in Spring* long weekend. The stop-motion animations were projected onto Mindful Marsupials - large Kangaroo cut outs (pictured) that were displayed along the festival fence.



"Most kids today seem to be mindful and respectful of their natural environment. The focus of the workshops looked at ways the students could share their own message portraying simple ways others can help preserve their local area, especially eliminating litter and reducing pollution to protect local

wildlife including turtles that nest on their beach," Wendy said.

"Seeing these young people aware of, and acting on issues that are important to them, and their community, gives me confidence they will be part of a global solution as they forge their own path in a world they have inherited."

THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS BYRON BAY NSW

Lealah Shostak-Herber thought the film and Q&A event at Byron Bay as part of the 'In Our Hands' project would help educate locals about climate issues and provide some local solutions. She was overjoyed to discover that many people were already tackling issues in their own area and backyards. It was the motivation that many needed.

Lealah, Youth Activities Coordinator at Byron Youth Service Inc., wasn't the only one inspired by the evening. The Q&A became more of an information exchange where people offered advice and shared what they were doing regarding weed control, seasonal changes and the impact of heavy rainfall. Many who attended the Q&A then joined in a tree-planting of the area around Byron Youth Service, which was run in partnership with Bangalow Koalas and Byron Shire Permaculture.

The work achieved as part of the *In Our Hands* project, which was supported by Highways and Byways, has not only improved the area, but has given hope to many young people overwhelmed by the growing climate crisis. Twenty-four volunteers of all ages cleared a very large area of out-of-control scrub around the BYS and planted about 80 edible and native trees. Participants were also invited to do close up botanical studies of leaves and to draw what they saw using charcoal.



Lealah, who is also part of Bangalow Koalas, said plans for the events were impacted by COVID and ongoing heavy rain, but the project turned into a great success.

"Ten years ago we were organising movie nights and information sessions about climate issues and you might get five people coming along. We had 50 people involved in this project, which shows that commitment to action has really grown, especially when you can make the focus local," Lealah said.

"This project is so important because it is practical and it gives young people hope that we can do something to combat climate problems."



HEALING THE LAND IS NO QUICK FIX CAPE YORK QLD



Indigenous man Trevor Meldrum and Vera Scarth-Johnson, the English botanist who 'adopted' him, have saved more farming land around Cooktown in Queensland than most people will ever realise.

Trevor, the Environmental Operations Manager with the small not-for-profit Cape York Weeds and Feral Animals Incorporated (pictured), is working closely with community groups and farmers to restore areas of Cape York.

Trevor knows that fixing environmental problems and eradicating noxious weeds and feral animals takes a long time and a lot of commitment. But he relishes the chance to work with people who share his passion for the land.

He loves his country and says his determination was strengthened by his very early years with Vera, whose work and botanical illustrations helped so many Australians grow to love and value the flora and environment around Cooktown and the Endeavour River Valley, on Cape York Peninsula.

Trevor's organisation, with support from Highways and Byways, has run training field days where locals come and discuss their land management, weeds and feral animal issues. It also provides one-on-one support to farmers and organisation interested in restorative land management.

"We help heal our land and ourselves by training our people to reduce the loss of natural habitats, degradation and fragmentation, and to protect and conserve important World Heritage Areas."

Trevor said a recent project illustrated the work of his organisation, which is run, by part-time officers and volunteers with decades of land management experience.

"We worked closely with a landholder who bought a

large cattle property in Endeavour Valley. The property was a mess and we had to start from scratch working with them on weed identification, the use of herbicides and animal trapping techniques. These people were passionate about the country and wanted to make the land well again. They were willing to change behaviours rather than go for the quick fix which could be bad for the environment," Trevor said.

"I blame Vera, my grandma, who was a true environmentalist. I love my work; it gives me a reason to get out of bed every day."



HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

Healing the Land Healing Ourselves Together 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.

Phone: 03 9873 5520

Email: admin@highwaysandbywaysltd.org.au

Website: highwaysandbyways.org.au



@highwaysandbyways.org.au



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MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SERVICE

A mission of love and service into the highways and byways

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FINDING HOPE IN A TIME OF UNCERTAINTY AND CONFLICT

Autumn has commenced and the air is getting cooler as the various foliage and leaves around us commence their annual transition from green to gold, yellow, orange and red. In this time of change, we pray that that period of strict COVID lockdowns and restrictions have come to an end so that people can start to plan ahead and rebuild their lives. During this time we are particularly conscious of those impacted by the devastating floods in Queensland and New South Wales and the war being inflicted on the people of Ukraine. We pray for peace. We pray for those seeking safety and refuge, and for those seeking to rebuild their lives. May the consolation of our loving God be felt deeply and constantly.

SOME GENERAL UPDATES

The Missionary Sisters of Service continue to move along with the transition for our services to Emerging Futures Collaborative Limited (EFCL). There are a growing number of religious institutes in Australia that are coming on board who are at different stages of the transition process. A further task conducted by EFCL is to employ people on our behalf, to support our sisters into the future.

We are pleased to share that Catherine Carr is the first of these people – she has been our Congregational Coordinator since December last year. Originally from country Victoria, Catherine has lived and worked in Melbourne, Hobart and Canberra. She began her working life as a secondary teacher in the humanities and Religious Education. Later on, she completed a Masters Degree in Pastoral Counselling and has worked for the past 16 years in the Pastoral and Bereavement Services Department at Cabrini Hospital in Melbourne, managing the department for the last four years. Speaking of her new role, Catherine said, ‘The hands on, grounded and pioneering approach and spirit of mission in Australia articulated by the MSS, in particular the individual sisters’ stories, excited me. It is not surprising to me that the pioneering quality of the MSS has led them to participate with EFCL. The sisters are, without exception, warm, welcoming and hospitable. They are rugged individualists; strong; sensitive, and possessing between themselves a broad array of skills and attributes. I have been especially struck by the energy between the sisters when they are gathered together and reminisce together with their mission stories. Exhilarating!’



WE’VE MOVED!

We are selling our office in Vermont! We have now opened a small office at the University of Divinity site in Box Hill. It’s a place where we can meet and keep some of our current archives to do some work on them. Our office is located next door to Highways and Byways – Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves, Together. We’re still getting used to seeing our name in big letters on the sign out front.

PONDERING THE WONDERS OF THE UNIVERSE – A REFLECTION

Between Christmas and New Year, Bernadette Madden MSS and Corrie van den Bosch MSS spent “five glorious days” in Victoria’s High Country, in the company of 11 members of the Catholic Walking Club of Victoria. In a reflection written for Contemplative Evolution Network, *Room in our Hearts for the Wonders of the Universe*, Corrie wrote:

“The silence of the High Country is profound. It seeped into my soul, setting me free from my normal preoccupations. No radio or television, no news bulletins. This was a time to simply Be in the beauty and grandeur of our surroundings. At night, the black moonless sky, brilliantly studded with stars and galaxies, drew me deeper into the mystery of the Cosmos. I felt so privileged to be there, to be blessed with the health and fitness to explore such wild places, to breathe in the abundance of nature, and at its heart, the Sacred Presence that is almost palpable in such places.”

Having come down from the serenity and peace of the mountain, immersed in everyday life with “its noise, tensions and violence”, Corrie goes on to explore and unpack the question, **What is at the root of the unrest pervading our world?** and offers some helpful reflections on how we can be more open to the wonders of creation, and thus be more human. Given what’s going on in the world at the moment, with so much chaos and catastrophe, this is a timely and useful reflection to ponder. The full reflection can be accessed on our website: www.missionarysisters.org.au/spirituality



Photo courtesy Peter Walker

*Be carriers of hope for this generation, so it can be passed
on to the next generation without fear
but in love.*

Bishop Bill Morris (in his homily for the funeral of Imelda McMahon MSS)

FAREWELL AND THANK YOU TO LIZ

We officially farewelled Liz McAloon, executive officer of Highways and Byways, formerly the John Wallis Foundation, with a small gathering on Monday 28 February. From one day a week and a few small grants, Liz has grown the organisation over her eight years and four months, to what it is now – Highways and Byways – Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves, Together.

Reflecting on her work over this time, Liz said she's most proud of the growth in the organisation, and in having supported so many small isolated communities in programs that are led locally, while also encouraging leadership in others.

Her highlights include getting to know each and every one of the MSS, working collaboratively to translate the MSS's mission into today's complex world in practical ways and meeting inspirational people, especially travelling around rural Australia with Sr Carol Zinn and Sr Gail Worcelo.

In farewelling Liz, congregational leader Stancea Vichie MSS, said, 'It was so clear from the beginning that Liz brought such beautiful qualities, not just to the mission entity we Missionary Sisters of Service had set up in 2010, but to all of our sisters and the wider networks associated with it. Her gift for relating to all people, her vision, her readiness to listen and run with new ideas, her spirit of team work, the list goes on and on.

So eight years four months on as Liz moves on to another phase of her life journey, we can only express deep gratitude to Liz for her leadership and bringing Highways and Byways to the exciting moment it is in today.'

Read the full story and see more photos at www.missionarysisters.org.au/news



Photos from top down: Liz at her farewell; the 2018 John Wallis Memorial Lecture; Liz and her family selling our cookbook at a launch. Photos courtesy Fiona Basile.

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

CECILIA BAILEY MSS – A BEARER OF HOPE AND LOVE

Cecilia (Maureen) Bailey was born in Melbourne in 1931 and grew up in Deepdene, in Melbourne's eastern suburbs. She joined the MSS aged 24, in 1955 having been given a copy of *Into the Highways and Byways with the Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady* by her local parish priest (see photo). Impressed by photos of a nun at a typewriter, sisters visiting people and teaching children informally, and a caravan, she visited the mother house in Tasmania while on holiday, but then decided to "give it a go". She took on the name Cecilia at her profession due to her deep love of music and having already been inspired by St Cecilia, patron of music, who "sang to God in her heart".



In her earlier years, Cecilia worked in the Correspondence school, based in Hobart, Tasmania. In 1964, at the invitation of Bishop Brennan, Cecilia and four sisters travelled to Toowoomba, Queensland, to undertake ministry in the rural areas of the Diocese. The photo below shows Cecilia on mission on the Birdsville Track in outback Queensland. Cecilia was appointed Formation Director in 1969 and later became Congregational Leader. In this role, she visited the sisters in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria. At 91-years-young, Cecilia is retired and enjoying life in Toowoomba, Queensland. When asked what she's grateful for, Cecilia said, "Certainly that priest because I know I would never have thought of a vocation, only for him. And then to think it was the MSS! I'm grateful for the missions that I was able to go on and for my time in leadership. I loved visiting the Sisters, that was the best part of it as far as I was concerned."

*People have always been at the heart of mission.
May our gracious God continue to enfold you in Love.
God continues to delight in you.
- Cecilia Bailey MSS*



Photo: MSS Archives

Photo of Cecilia above courtesy Fiona Basile