



Missionary Sisters of Service

A MISSION OF LOVE AND SERVICE INTO THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

NEWSLETTER

Returning to our Foundations: Bruny Island

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From 20–24 November 2025, sisters, friends and colleagues of the MSS gathered on Bruny Island, Tasmania, for a four-day pilgrimage. Bruny Island is a significant place in MSS history. It was here in 1933 that local mother, Mrs Kit Hawkins, asked young priest Fr John Wallis, 'Who is looking after us in the bush?' This heartfelt question sparked the founding of the MSS. Based in Adventure Bay for the pilgrimage, each morning our group gathered for a time of reflection before walking to various sites linked to the MSS story and the island's First Nations heritage. Each afternoon, participants shared insights, stories and learnings. A highlight of the pilgrimage was being guided by Alarna Page, a proud Melukerdee woman from lutruwita/trowunna/Tasmania. Alarna led visits to culturally significant locations including a seaside kelp forest, Truganini Lagoon, a midden site, and a grass tree site. She shared her knowledge of cultural identity, and connection to land.

Using excerpts from Fr John's letters to his mother from 1933, participants traced some of the paths he took while visiting isolated families. The group walked along Neck Beach, and to the top of Mount Mangana, Bruny's highest peak. The final day focused on how the MSS mission has evolved—from its founding women, to the creation of The John Wallis Foundation (later known as Highways and Byways Ltd), and its current partnership with Mary MacKillop Today ensuring its small grants program continues. Participants visited the historic Cape Bruny lighthouse and joined locals at St Brendan's Catholic Church in Alonnah for Mass (photo below), celebrated by Fr Graeme Howard, a long-time friend of the MSS and Fr John Wallis. The pilgrimage ended with gratitude, a shared meal, and a renewed sense that the spirit and mission of the MSS remains vibrant and relevant today. *Read the full story on our website: www.missionarysisters.org.au/news*



Photos courtesy Fiona Basile

Highlights from the 2025 Pilgrimage to Bruny Island, Tasmania



Top row from left: Alarna Page shows Glenn D'Souza and Mary Williams how to weave twine for kelp basket-making; Bernadette Madden MSS and Carmel Merrey demonstrate how to weave the twine; MSS Archivist Julia Walsh shows off her completed kelp basket. Middle from left: Alarna Page leads the pilgrimage group to Truganini Lagoon; relics of a midden site; Alarna holding two fragments broken off a grass tree trunk which can be burned into a sticky resin. Below: The group with their completed kelp baskets; and Truganini Lagoon.





Top row, from left: The pilgrimage group get ready to walk along Neck Beach; Rita Alcock and Bernadette Wallis MSS try some 'bush tucker'; Stewardship Council member and pilgrim, David Alcock. Second row from left: Carmel Merrey and Stancea Vichie MSS walk up from the beach at Cape Bruny lighthouse; Lui and Marie Basile, with daughter Fiona Basile (our photographer and media gal); Malcom and Carmel Merrey with long time friend, Fr Graeme Howard. Below: Bruny Island pilgrimage group.



Announcing the 2026 MSS Scholarship in Honour of Teresa Morse



Photo: MSS Archives

We are delighted to announce that the next MSS Scholarship will be awarded in honour of Teresa Morse (pictured left), co-founder of the MSS. The scholarship supports a young woman undertaking a Masters of Theological Studies through the University of Divinity (including its numerous sites). This announcement felt especially meaningful as it was made during our pilgrimage on Bruny Island, where the MSS story first began. We were joined on pilgrimage by this year's scholarship recipient, Alarna Page, a proud Melukerdee woman and emerging leader. This upcoming scholarship will be the fourth awarded by the MSS, and we are excited to see a growing community of young women leaders shaped by faith, service and a commitment to justice. We look forward to receiving applications by Christmas.

Supporting the Highways and Byways Small Grants Program

The Highways and Byways Small Grants Program—now part of Mary MacKillop Today—continues the mission of the MSS by supporting small, community-led projects across Australia. To make a tax-deductible donation and direct it specifically to Highways and Byways, please:

1. Visit the Mary MacKillop Today donation page (scan QR code or go to: www.marymackilloptoday.org.au/donate)
2. Click **Donate Now**
3. Select the amount and fill in your details
4. In the 'Your message' box, write: 'Please direct my donation to the Highways and Byways Small Grants Program'.



Any mention of Highways and Byways will ensure your donation supports this program. Your generosity helps continue the MSS legacy of connection and service in communities across Australia.

Christmas Blessings

Friends, as 2025 draws to a close, we pray you all enjoy a holy and blessed Christmas season and a safe and happy holiday and new year. We continue to give thanks for all of you who journey with us, and who hold us close in prayer and in your hearts. May God bless you all abundantly. We look forward to staying in touch with you in the new year.

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