

Highways and Byways

A COMMUNITY OF SERVICE

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



Greetings everyone,

We are delighted to be working as Highways and Byways in 2019. We have had a smooth transition from the John Wallis Foundation and we greatly appreciate your continued support – thank you for your generous response to our December 2018 appeal letter.

In March I had the pleasure of travelling to Roma and Toowoomba in Queensland to begin to look at ways in which Highways and Byways can contribute to supporting rural communities struggling with the long term effects of drought, the changed economic conditions and the ongoing realities of living considerable distances from services and in some cases employment opportunities. Highways and Byways is keen to work with local groups and partnerships in ways which reflect the ethos and spirit of the Missionary Sisters of Service – grounded, relational, respectful, and building community from the grass roots.

Jenny Coggan from Injune, a long time friend of the MSS, organized a gathering in Roma of community members and agencies, In Toowoomba Pat Quinn MSS organized a similar gathering. Deep listening was the order of the day. There was much synergy between the two meetings - the need for self care in ravaged communities was emphasized, as was ongoing support, not one-off initiatives. Building community connectedness, focusing on families and making the most of where we live were also key themes. Stay tuned for more as we develop programs during the year.

We have recently been busily assessing the 2019 Small Grants program applications. We will announce the successful grant recipients in our next newsletter. Enjoy reading about the wonderful grants outcomes of some of our 2018 program.

Liz McAloon
Executive Officer

Happy day for grieving community Laura, Queensland



Above: Men from the Ang Gnarra community help prepare the food for the Happy Day Towards Healing. (See Page 2)

Hospitality on the menu in Foster Foster, Victoria



Above: Local "Ambos" from the Foster area drop in on a Manna Gum Community House Lunch – cooked with lots of fresh produce from the Community Garden. (See Page 4)

into the highways and byways

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



Bringing people together... ...Healing the pain of loss

Happy day for grieving community
Laura, Queensland



August said one of the standout features of the day was the fun and laughter and the way the community all pulled together to make that possible.

"The whole day created a sense of family belonging and as a whole community, with so much happiness and laughter that we hadn't seen much of for a while with so much sadness."



A happy day can't take away the unbearable pain of losing a child or a close relative or friend, but it can help a community feel it is supported. That was the response of the Ang Gnarra Indigenous community in the small, remote town of Laura on Queensland's Cape York Peninsula, after their first planned 'happy day'.

The community held a happy day, supported by the John Wallis Foundation, as part of its healing following the deaths of several community members in a short space of time.

The community happy day was about fun and laughter and food for all. Food was bought for celebrating a meal together with young and old, cooked in a traditional underground oven pit. Gifts and prizes were bought for the young people for activities and games during the day.

Ang Gnarra Aboriginal Corporation General Manager August Stevens, said the event was a special day for the community that has endured a prolonged period of grief with five deaths in two years, of young and old people.

"This is a community of about 100 people who are all extended family," August said,

"The community also experiences on-going unemployment, limited access to amenities due to its remoteness and a frustrating housing situation."

2019 has started on a positive note for the Ang Gnarra people after Quinkan Country, which surrounds the town of Laura, was added to the National Heritage List. August said the community had battled for a long time to have the ancient rock art and country recognised in this way.

"This sort of action gives our people a sense that their land, heritage and art is valued. It reignites energy in our community. Importantly, for the community, we hope it will help create a lot of jobs for our people, especially our young people," August said.



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Ladies put on a scene at workshop

Bundaberg, Queensland



Mix 20 older women, a passionate drama teacher and an invitation to play, and the results can be powerful. That was the experience at The Lakes Retirement Village in Bundaberg, Queensland, when Creative Regions ran a full day theatre workshop for residents. Creative Regions works to develop social connections and help the community thrive through arts and culture.

The women who participated threw caution to the wind and embraced the opportunity to play, perform and do something completely different.



Above: Residents ham it up for the camera during the theatre workshop.

“We were all taken out of our comfort zone and at our age, that doesn't happen very often,” said one of the residents after the workshop, funded by the John Wallis Foundation.

Di Willis, creative director with Creative Regions, said people, especially older people in regional and remote areas seldom get the chance to experience theatre except as a member of the audience. But, she said, the workshop was such a success that the women are asking for a repeat performance.

Di said the workshops are about much more than performing; they are about taking risks and trying something new. The community space at The Lakes village was a safe space for the novice performers who were surprised at their own willingness to participate with such enthusiasm.

“We know from research we have done with Central Queensland University that people who sign up for these things are more likely to try other new things because they have less fear of failure. These sorts of workshops can really build an older person's confidence and give them the courage to have a go at something else that is new to them,” Di said.

Reconnecting young women

New South Wales

Seven Indigenous women and girls made a powerful discovery during a weekend away organised by Barnardos Australia and Stephanie Dale from The Write Road.

The women discovered that someone wanted to hear their story. Someone asked them to write down what it felt like to have a loved one in prison, or what it was like to have been in prison. And when the words were on paper, some read them out and everyone cared that they had suffered and felt loss, anger and isolation.

Reconnecting Young Women was a weekend retreat at Burrendong Dam, near Wellington in NSW, for young women and their mothers/carers, who have experienced a family member or loved one being in prison, or who have been in prison.

At the retreat, which was supported by the John Wallis Foundation, the participants were introduced, over three workshops, to the idea of writing for wellbeing; journaling and using writing as a tool for navigating, challenges and difficulties; writing for self-reflection, and writing to clarify a goal or a longing and what might be a first step towards that vision.

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into the highways and byways

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Reconnecting young women

... continued

The weekend and writing workshops were also a way for the mothers and carers to strengthen their relationships, through shared meal preparations and yarning around the evening campfire. One mother said: "This is the first time I've seen what my daughter seen."

Mark Hoare from Barnardos Australia said the workshops were focused on helping participants to believe that their story was important and that others cared about their grief suffered through

separation. He said at the end of the weekend the young women and mothers felt more confident in their capacity to express how they felt.

"A lot of young people think that the trauma they experienced during the separation from their mothers is 'normal'. So to be encouraged to discuss it and write about how it felt, is really important," Mark said.

The young women are still a part of Barnardos projects and are able to access support.



Hospitality is on the menu in Foster Foster, Victoria

Gardeners, with many years volunteering under their belts, have transformed parts of Foster in southern Victoria into a thriving fruit and veggie garden. Produce is grown in the main street and in land behind the Community House, which was once a police horse paddock.

All food grown by the Manna Community Garden's army of volunteers is shared amongst volunteers and at community events and used to cook regular community lunches, which began last year with support from the John Wallis Foundation,

The lunches, cooked in the Manna Gum Community House's new kitchen, bring together a wide range of the community; many who suffer isolation, mental health issues, are aged and have transport problems.

Other town organisations have also joined the lunch movement, making it possible for people to attend each month. St Vincent de Paul volunteers pick people up for the lunch, using a bus generously provided by the Foster Golf Club.



Janne McPhie, who has been a Manna Community Garden volunteer gardener, and treasurer, for 12 of the gardens 19 years, said the lunches offered a unique and friendly environment for people wanting to make community connections.

Volunteers put on the monthly lunches and also for special occasions such as Christmas and Bastille Day on July 14 – a nod to the French born volunteer cook. Manna Community Garden isn't large and also relies on produce from the nearby Buckley Park Community Farm in Fish Creek.

The current luncheon menu features freshly picked tomatoes, rocket, lettuce, peas, beans, silverbeet, zucchinis, capsicum, basil, figs, apples and cumquats.

One of the key ingredients on the menu is hospitality.

"These lunches connect people with each other and create an even stronger community," said Janne. "There is one lady who loves scones so much that she brings freshly baked scones to every lunch so we don't need to get bread."

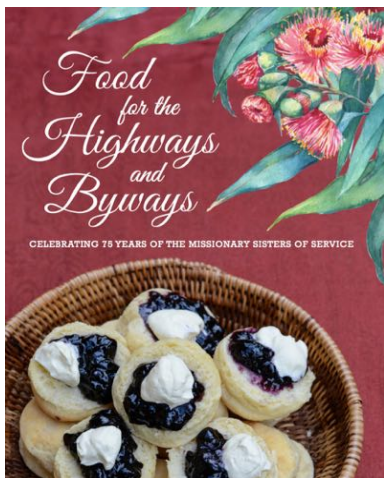


Highways & Byways



Volume 52 no. 1 *Missionary Sisters of Service Newsletter*
April 2019

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Food for the Highways and Byways cookbook: Celebrating 75 years of the Missionary Sisters of Service

We're excited to announce that our commemorative cookbook, *Food for the Highways and Byways* is now available! This is much more than a recipe book. It contains beautiful photos of the sisters throughout the years, information about our mission and outreach, resources and stories. It truly is a collector's item and would make a fantastic gift for Mother's day or for anyone you hold dear.

The first official book launch will take place on Sunday 5 May in Toolangi, Victoria, 287 Smiths Road, from 2pm-4pm. CEO of FareShare, Marcus Godinho, will launch the cookbook. All are welcome to attend! Launch events are scheduled for other locations throughout the year.

Book your place for the Toolangi launch by calling (03) 9837 5520 or email: mssadmin@missionarysisters.org.au

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR 2019

MSS 75-Year Anniversary Celebrations, Melbourne

Sunday 7 July, 10.30am, St Thomas the Apostle Church, Central Road, Blackburn, Victoria, followed by lunch in the parish hall.

MSS Rosary House Day: Monday 8 July, with celebrations taking place locally, with scones!

MSS Consultations, Toowoomba: Thursday 1 August.

MSS 75-Year Anniversary Mass, Toowoomba

Sunday 4 August, St Anthony's Church, 3 Memory St, Harristown, 2pm. Celebrant: Bishop Bill Morris. Afternoon tea will follow in the community centre.

MSS Graveside Celebrations: Monday 5 August, Drayton Toowoomba Cemetery; Saturday 26 October, Springvale Botanical Cemetery, Melbourne; Monday 25 November, Cornelian Bay Cemetery, Hobart.

John Wallis Memorial Lecture and Cookbook Launch,

Melbourne: Tuesday 13 August, Genazzano FCJ College, 301 Cotham Road, Kew, 7pm, featuring renowned journalist and broadcaster, Geraldine Doogue.

MSS Consultations, Melbourne: Thursday 22 August.

John Wallis Memorial Lecture and Cookbook Launch, Hobart:

Thursday 12 September, Guilford Young College, 94 Barrack St, Hobart, Tasmania, at 7pm.

MSS Consultations, Hobart: Saturday 14 September.

MSS Chapter /Assembly: Wednesday 23 to Sunday 27 October, Holy Cross Templestowe.

Victorian Yarck To Yea Walk Run Event: Saturday 12 October.

Walking Pilgrimage, Bruny Island Tasmania

Thurs 21 November – Sun 24 November 2019. Enquiries / expressions of Interest by 18 April 2019 to Bernadette Madden: bernden16@gmail.com or call 0408 505 387.

Congratulations to Margaret Kenny mss, celebrating 60 years of profession.

Margaret Kenny mss celebrates her Diamond Jubilee of profession on 25 March 2019. Reflecting on her 60 years, Margaret says,

"I'm wondering where the time has gone! I'm so grateful for the welcome, acceptance and love that the people gave us; the way they welcomed us into their families. We developed such wonderful friendships, which remained long after we left places. "And I'm also grateful for the tremendous support and companionship of the Sisters within the Congregation, which also remained even after we'd moved onto our different places.

Congratulations also to Bernadette Madden MSS and Maureen Hickling MSS, who both celebrate 40 years of profession this year.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PAIN IN OUR COMMUNITY

We women of the Missionary Sisters of Service acknowledge the deep pain being felt by so many people as revelations of sexual abuse of children and vulnerable adults continue to emerge. We especially acknowledge the pain of the survivors of such abuse and its impact on them, their families and communities. The commitment of the Missionary Sisters of Service to justice, healing and abiding by safeguarding standards will continue as always, now and into the future.

Photos by Fiona Basile
www.fionabasile.com



Margaret Windsham mss: A Woman of Compassion

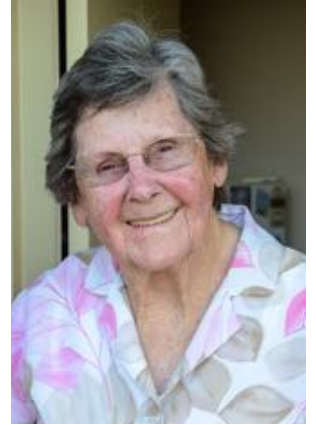
Imagine Hobart late August 1958. There is great excitement on the front verandah of the Novitiate House. Four very happy, young, newly professed sisters are saying their goodbye and moving to begin the life they have been training for over the past three years. As they/we (yes! I'm one of them) walk down the drive to a waiting car, we hear the strains of *Que sera, sera. Whatever will be will be. The future's not ours to see ... And so we stepped into that future.*

Longford (Tasmania) is our mission house and my destination. My mission will be country missions. I am very happy as it is my deep compassion for our country Catholics that has led me to this point in time. I remember how my feeling for our isolated people came to be.

At about 16 years of age, I came across the story of *Flynn of the Inland*. I was so inspired by his love and care for country people. A year or so later a second and very telling experience brought my compassion to the surface once more. As a member of the Legion of Mary, I went each week to visit *The Bush Children's Home* at Rose Bay (Townsville Qld), in our suburb and parish.

I accompanied our priest on these visits and gave some religious instruction to the children – mostly Aboriginal children. In six weeks we prepared them for their first reconciliation and first Communion.

In August 1955, leaving my close family ties in Townsville I headed for Hobart to join the *Home Missionary Sisters of Our Lady*, as we were known then. Three years later my yearning to reach isolated country people became a reality.



**Margaret
Windsham mss**

The words, *Que sera, sera* have often come to mind over the years, many of them spent travelling the highways and byways of Tasmania, of western NSW, Port Pirie diocese SA, Toowoomba diocese and Richmond in my home diocese of Townsville.

Over the years of missioning – 60 to be exact – many roads have led me to many, many families, of many or no religious affiliations. While compassion has been very real for me, I also carry deep gratitude for the care and kindness extended to myself and each of our Missionary Sisters of Service: warm hospitality, accommodation and ready cooperation. I remember when *station hopping* in the real outback, the man of the house saying, “Sister, give me the keys of your car”. Then, when we drove away, the car was filled with petrol and serviced, plus extra petrol in the boot “just in case”. Times without number this happened.

The “just in case” was truly a necessity at times. Getting bogged in sandy soil and trying to dig the wheels out with bare hands because, (you guessed it, we forgot to pack our shovel when leaving home!): taking a wrong road in the pitch black night and finding ourselves driving ‘round and ‘round in a paddock on our own wheel tracks! The wonder when, driving to Normanton in the Gulf country, I found brolgas dancing – how lovely! So many experiences ... and always a loving God caring for us and protecting us through the kind hearts of so many of our country people. We have been truly blessed by them.

After many years on the roads, I moved from Toowoomba to the Sunshine Coast to follow a dream of many years: to have a home big enough to have country women come to stay – for a rest, a holiday or whatever. This began to happen. At the same time I was conducting small groups of women on spiritual/personal growth, and organised counsellors from Brisbane to give workshops on personal growth. The latter part of my dream flourished, but sadly, I could not continue the welcoming of country women to my home. Local agencies were sending women for accommodation who were emotionally wounded. I was not trained to give them the help they needed.

A second dream came through my compassion for the people of East Timor struggling to build up their poor and devastated country. I began raising money with garage sales and stalls at markets. Many people of various faiths helped in this project, as well as parishioners and friends from near and far. Beryl Gleeson mss, at that time living in the parish, also came on board. We sold bric-a-brac and anything we could lay hands on. We were able to send quite a lot of money to various missions in Timor. A dream come true!

Somewhere along the line *Operation Christmas Child* found me! This is a project of *Samaritan's Purse* and it was a project that set my heart on fire. Once more friends, relatives and parishioners joined me in my dream of sending many hundreds of Christmas boxes to children overseas. This truly was a beautiful part of my ministry, which brought groups together and cemented many friendships.

Yet another dream came true when I did a pilgrimage to the Holy Land as part of a spirituality course in England. I thank our MSS Congregation for this wonderful opportunity to visit the holy places.

And the most recent dream of all came about when I returned to Toowoomba to live. For a number of years I nurtured a dream, of saying “thank you” in a special way to our country people from all over Australia who have always been so very good to us. I could not put that dream into reality by myself, but when I mentioned it to the sisters here, they caught its spark. We held an *At Home* one Sunday afternoon, and sent out invitations to as many people as we could find, living within reach of Toowoomba. Words can't describe the spirit and joy of that gathering – a nucleus of the Oh-so-many kind and caring people who not only helped on the local level as we visited their areas, but who also helped build the spirit and ministry of our small and fledgling MSS Congregation.

Memories come flooding in as I come to the end of my *Que sera sera*, my future almost lived out. My heart overflows with gratitude for the amazing richness that my years on the highways and byway have brought me.