

# HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

HEALING THE LAND, HEALING OURSELVES, TOGETHER

# NEWSLETTER



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and Byways**

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER JANE COLLOPY

Thank you to you all for your generous support of Highways and Byways throughout 2022! We've had an incredibly busy year, with an extensive Small Grants Program supporting 42 projects totaling \$114,000, and growth of our longer term programs in Roma and north-eastern Tasmania. We have also committed longer term support to one of our small grants from 2021, Free2B Time, and have been able to hold several events in person for the first time since the start of the Covid19 pandemic.

brought together a group of women from across all ages who have a family connection to Gunggari and Gungabula Country. Given many First Nations women have been discouraged from sharing their culture and language over many years, the opportunity to do so on this camp was particularly valued. Some of the younger women had not received this kind of cultural knowledge from other women before, so the opportunity was incredibly valued. We thank Religious of Queensland for their generous support of the program.

Megan Brown and Jen Coggan also ran a Community Wellbeing program in the small rural south-west Queensland towns of Wallumbilla and Roma (Mandandanji Country), Injune (Gungabula Country) and Mitchell (Gunggari Country). Women living very remote lives made the significant step to commit to a day of self-care, travelling into these towns to experience the benefits of yoga and mindfulness based practices.

The women loved the experience, especially the sense of being supported by the community to do something for themselves! We thank Australia Post for supporting this Seeds of Connection program so generously!

## RESTORING NATURE AND COMMUNITIES

Highways and Byways is very happy to announce that we will be continuing our partnership with Todd Dudley's Restoring Nature and Communities program into 2023, providing ecological

## 2023 SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Our 2023 Small Grants program opens for applications on 1 February 2023.

Grants up to \$4,000 will be available for projects that support communities as they attempt to HEAL AND GROW in the aftermath of the environmental (drought, flood and fire) and social (pandemic impacted) challenges of recent years.

Applications close 15 March 2023.

See our website for further information: [www.hb.org.au/grants](http://www.hb.org.au/grants)

## SUBSCRIBE TO OUR E-NEWSLETTER

This year we launched a digital edition of our newsletter. This allows us to do some exciting things which are not possible in a paper version, such as sharing videos and extra information on our programs and grants. You'll also be able to forward articles easily with others who might be interested.

To subscribe simply send us your email address! Call or email us at [newsletter@hb.org.au](mailto:newsletter@hb.org.au).

## SEEDS OF CONNECTION

Our Seeds of Connection program in Roma (south-east Queensland) recently ran its second Wandering Spirits cultural camp. Vernessa Fien, a proud descendant of both the Gunggari and Bidjara mobs from the Maranoa district,



IMAGE: Top, Liz McAloon, Jeff Byrne, Elizabeth Byrne, Catherine Carr and Marg Casey at Bruny Island. Image courtesy Fiona Basile, MSS. Left: Megan Brown and Vernessa Fien.

work for four unemployed men. In 2022, the University of Tasmania released its report on this project, *Ecological Restoration Activities and the Benefits for Human Health and Wellbeing*. It highlights the program's dignified work and investment in local employment and economy, and how it fosters connection to the land, restoration of natural biosystems and wildlife habitat corridors and the development of ecological literacy. It's a wonderful example of the United Nations call to restore our planet, and Pope Francis' urgent call for our "ecological transition".

**JOHN WALLIS MEMORIAL LECTURE**

The Hobart branch of Highways and Byways was pleased to once again host an in-person John Wallis Memorial Lecture, featuring guest speaker Dr Elissa Roper. Held at Guilford Young College in Glenorchy, Tasmania, Elissa was very engaging as she inspired us to engage with each other as discerning, Spirit-filled people of joy! The lecture was well attended both in person and online, from all around Australia.

**TOOWOOMBA BRANCH AFTERNOON TEA GATHERING**

After almost three years since gathering due to Covid19, the Toowoomba Branch of Highways and Byways was able to gather for a lovely afternoon tea at the SPRED centre. It was a lovely celebration of community, and resulted in some exciting hopes and plans for 2023!

**FREE2B TIME**

In 2023, we will be extending our longer term project work to include the Free2B Time program to create a safe place for young women who are socially and geographically isolated in St Helens, Tasmania. Program Coordinator Tani Langoulant has dedicated countless volunteer hours to provide small group and 1:1 support to these young women over recent years, providing a sense of belonging and safety so they can exercise their freedom, choice and creativity. We are so excited about the prospective development of the program

through our partnership and support of Tani and her team.

**YARCK TO YEA - WALK, RIDE, RUN**

We were also thrilled to be able to again host our Yarck to Yea - Walk, Ride, Run after a two year break due to Covid19. This is our annual fundraising event and a valued partnership with the Catholic community of Yea.

Fifty people braved a foggy morning in late August to walk, run and cycle along the Great Victorian Rail Trail starting at various points between Yarck and Yea. A further 40 locals joined in at the conclusion of the event for a celebratory barbecue at the Old Yea Railway Station provided by the local Sacred Heart parish community.

We thank the Yea parish community for supporting us and for so warmly welcoming us back this year.



IMAGE: Stancea Vichie MSS and Bern Hogan along the trail. Images courtesy of Fiona Basile, MSS.

**IT'S A SLOW BURN**

**NELLIGEN, NSW**

Nelligen rural firefighter Robynne Murphy now sees more than a fire hazard in the overgrown grass and dense bush around Bateman's Bay. Through her involvement with the Bateman's Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council (BBLACL), her growing understanding of cultural burning has influenced

how she sees fire management. She hopes that the wisdom of cultural burning will be imbedded more into the Nelligen Rural Fire Services in the future and a recent two-part fire education initiative, run with support of Highways and Byways, was a good start.



IMAGE AND OVERLEAF: Rangers from Bateman's Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council lead a cultural burn demonstration.

The Nelligen Cultural Fire Management Project: Healing the Land, Caring for Community, brought the community together to promote recovery and resilience in the wake of the 2019-20 bushfires, which ravaged the region and resulted in loss of lives and significant environmental and economic impacts.

A 'sellout' workshop, open to locals, farmers, local government and fire services staff, explored the differences between Indigenous cultural burning and practices used by fire services, as well as fire preparedness, cultural burning techniques and the benefits for flora and fauna regeneration. Walbunja Rangers demonstrated traditional fire practices during a cultural burn on a nearby farm after the workshop.

"The way we learn to manage fire hazards is very different to the approach of First Nations people whose priority is to care for the land and the fauna and to look more closely at what needs to be burnt and what needs to remain for seed propagation and safety of animals. We are taught to reduce fire hazards to protect people and assets, though we do of course do environmental assessments," Robynne said.

"Rural fire services have been managing fires in a certain way for a long time so it's a slow process understanding different ways and possibly integrating them into what we do. It won't

happen overnight."

Several landowners who attended the workshops are now working with traditional owners to look at how cultural burning might improve their land and protect habitats.

"Apart from gaining a better understanding of the practice of cultural burning by Indigenous people, this process was a way of breaking down some of the barriers that exist in the community. It was a good beginning," Robynne said.



## THE GRASS REALLY IS GREENER NOW

### OUTBACK WESTERN NSW

Sarah Mashford looks out the window of her home today and sees small, green, native frangipanis, an olive bush hedge and rows of bottle brush. For a while, during the crippling drought in NSW, Sarah saw nothing but red dirt and the remnants of trees that had once been windbreaks.

The Mashford cattle and sheep property, Katalpa, is one of 21 properties in the landcare group based around the Koonenberry Ranges in far northwestern NSW to benefit from the 'Outback Oasis' project supported by Highways and Byways. The 21 properties were provided with plants and supported to re-establish shade, shelter and habitat around their homesteads.

The drought had a terrible affect on families and Sarah, who is secretary of the landcare group, said domestic gardens and windbreaks were the last thing some families could consider saving during such a difficult time.

"One woman near me had to travel more than 300km to Broken Hill to do her washing. Many families had to pay to have clean water trucked in for drinking and bathed in water that was pretty dirty," Sarah said. "So there was no way to

save our homestead trees and when the terrible red dust storms came we were hit by that too. It was really very hard on peoples' emotional well being."

Now the rain has come and it's a good year for pastoralists and farmers in the area. It also provided a real opportunity for replanting. Most properties had traditionally grown eucalypts and Sarah said many were now trying new varieties around their homes to encourage birds and provide shelter from the winds.

The 'Outback Oasis' project meant 1,000 seedlings, including saltbush, thorny saltbush and pop saltbush, box trees, lemon scented gum, kurrajong, bottle brush and coral gums, were distributed amongst the 21 properties and people are keenly watching their new plants grow and exchanging information about what species grows best in what area.

"Many of these families have been on these properties for generations and the trees they lost are very old. But planting new trees is a sign of hope. We may not be around to sit under the shade of these trees, but generations to come will and that is a very satisfying thought," Sarah said.



IMAGES L to R: Members of Koonenberry Natural Resources Management Inc with seedlings, new plantings in situ.



## THINGS ARE BUZZING IN DODGES FERRY

### DODGES FERRY, TAS

The honeybees around Dodges Ferry in Tasmania are in safe hands. Extra hives were built at the Okines Community House during a series of five workshops supported by Highways and Byways. As well as educating a new generation of bee lovers and beekeepers, Carlos, one of the twenty-five workshop participants, has now taken over as volunteer carer of the bees.

The five workshops, run by Natural Beekeeping Tasmania, attracted existing beekeepers who were keen to fine tune their skills and learn how to build a Warre style hive, as well as people wanting to learn the craft and start their own hives. Carlos was one of the 'newbies'.

Community House manager Natalie Siggins said the participants who already keep bees developed a network and are now able to better support each other to maintain their hives and maximize bee health and honey production. She said participants learnt about hive types, building a Warre hive, natural queens, pest and diseases, and wintering down.

There are now four hives at the community house and they make up an important part of the community, pollinating plants in the community house garden and surrounding flowers, vegetables and fruit trees.

Natalie said one of the highlights was Carlos learning about bee keeping and volunteering to take on care of the bees after the garden coordinator left the position. The hives are producing honey, which is sold through the food co-operative at the community house.

"I had never before tasted honey that was fresh from the hive. It is so delicious," Natalie said.

The hives are also a vital part of the Grow & Learn education program involving grade 3, 4 and 5 students from Dodges Ferry Primary School. Each Friday students come with their teacher to the school's plot at the community garden and learn about plant life, growing food – and the role of bees in food production.



IMAGES Top: Vonnie Voight demonstrates the construction of a Warre Hive. Bottom: Honeycomb collected at Okines Community House.

## CHILDREN LEAD THE WAY

### GUNDAGAI, NSW

Step into the Gundagai Preschool Kindergarten and the 3 and 4 year old children will greet you in the traditional language of the local Wiradjuri people, or sing you a song acknowledging the traditional owners of the land along the Murrumbidgee River (Billa). They might even show you paintings of animals and places important to the Wiradjuri people, especially the goanna and eagle. The preschool's Aboriginal Awareness Program, run with support from Highways and Byways, is helping the children develop an understanding of local Wiradjuri history and culture.

Preschool coordinator Stacey Smith said the commitment to embed local Wiradjuri culture into the children's daily routine has been welcomed by the children, parents, community, and local elders who have participated in the program. As well as the Wiradjuri stories, songs and language, the children's own paintings of the goanna, the Wiradjuri totem, have been made into play blocks and puzzles.

Local elders Uncle Pat Connolly and Peter Smith have worked with staff and children to develop an understanding of language, art, and local Wiradjuri history, including the nearby Bora Rings site where traditional ceremonies would have taken place. "The children have loved hearing the stories and working with us over time to develop an acknowledgment of country using the ideas, images and words the Elders have taught us," Stacey said.

"Uncle Pat and Peter talked to the children, told stories, and taught us all about history and lore and how to take care of the land, animals, and each other. Each morning we have a yarn, a chance to come together and learn. It was at these yarns we developed our physical acknowledgment of country through art and our verbal acknowledgement we sing each day."

Stacey said one of the great outcomes of the program has been the interest and involvement of the wider preschool community. Parents regularly suggest ways to further develop the children's knowledge of the Wiradjuri culture.



IMAGE Above: Children complete Indigenous artworks using skills developed through the Aboriginal Awareness Program.

## BRUNY ISLAND PILGRIMAGE

Over four days in late November 2022 members of the Highways and Byways team and Board joined the Missionary Sisters of Service (MSS) and friends of our community in a four day pilgrimage across Bruny Island in southern Tasmania. Here those present reflect on the significance of the event to them. You can also read further about the pilgrimage in the enclosed MSS newsletter.



### MARG CASEY, CHAIR

My dream when I became Chair of Highways and Byways was to have the Board do some formation in the MSS story on Bruny Island. The impact of the pilgrimage on us as a Board has been profound; just watching everyone engage with those present, hearing the stories with new insights. I was just delighted that the Board had the opportunity to immerse themselves in all things MSS.

### BERN HOGAN, DIRECTOR

It's been a really beautiful experience. I can really see what the MSS means to the community that has been drawn to them over many years, and I hope that we at Highways and Byways can continue to provide support for small communities to strengthen their connections with each other through our programs.



### DENIS FITZGERALD, PATRON

The extended weekend at Bruny Island in late November 2022 was a step back from the usual pattern of life, inviting reflection and engagement around several interconnected themes:

- Bruny Island, with its long and complex history, natural beauty, deep connection with John Wallis, abundant wildlife and sparse but varied population
- Engagement with the natural world through extended walks and immersion in the wonderful diversity of land and seascapes, flowers, animals and birds
- The mission and heritage of Fr John Wallis, the Missionary Sisters of Service, and Highways and Byways

Each of these themes were built around the warm, diverse and welcoming people who had been brought together by the continuing relevance of following Christ through reaching out to those on the margins, addressing the cry of the poor and the cry of the earth.

Thank you to all associated with the journey - the whole continues to be much greater than the sum of the parts.



### JEFF BYRNE, DIRECTOR

The pilgrimage gives a transition from the past to the future. It gives us the spirit of the MSS. Listening to the stories of small projects, of Todd's program, the stories of the sisters' experiences and the stories of those who have worked with the sisters provides us with inspiration for what we can do as Highways and Byways as we move into the future.

### MARTIN ALLEN, DIRECTOR

Four days of learning, discovering and connecting. And slip sliding away (in the mud)!

*IMAGES Top: Marg Casey leads the walkers onto the beach. Centre: Bern Hogan. Bottom: Liz Jordan, Mary Williams and Eva Dunn. Courtesy Fiona Basile, MSS.*

## STANCEA VICHIE, MSS CONGREGATIONAL LEADER

Awesome... 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.



## BERNADETTE MADDEN MSS

It's been quite an achievement just getting so many of the MSS and Highways and Byways community here to Bruny Island! And then to survive that mud on the walk to the Fluted Cape – we really did have to work together as a team to get there! Some may look back and call this “Bruny Island Survivor!” At the end of the day, it's been a great opportunity for the Board to come together, and connect into the spirit of the MSS through their stories and that of John Wallis.



*IMAGES Right top: Liz McAloon, Bern Hogan, Jane Collopy and Marg Casey inspect the new Bruny Island information panel.  
Left top: Jeff Byrne, Martin Allen, Eva Dunn and Stancea Vichie.  
Right bottom: Martin Allen, Jeff Byrne, Elizabeth Byrne and Judy Cain at the top of the Cape Bruny Lighthouse.  
Left bottom: Left, Jane Collopy and daughter Zoe.  
Courtesy Fiona Basile, MSS.*

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# MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SERVICE

A mission of love and service into the highways and byways

## Newsletter

Volume 55 No. 3  
December 2022

### As another year draws to a close, we pause, take stock and give thanks

As we enter into Advent, on the fast approach to Christmas, we take time to reflect on the year that has been, and all that's taken place in our lives—the good, the bad, and everything in between. We remain conscious of the devastating floods across the east coast of Australia, which have caused much destruction and heart-ache, and the ongoing impact of COVID-19 in our communities. Within our own community, we remember Marie Carroll MSS who died in September, in Toowoomba, Queensland. We were so moved by all of the messages and comments on the MSS Facebook page, with so many of you expressing your love for, and fond memories of Marie's many years of service. We continue to welcome new staff members, employed by Emerging Futures Collaborative, to assist our community of women: Emilia Rubin, who looks after our administration and finance matters, and Glenn d'Souza, our new business manager. We have much to be grateful for, as we continue to journey alongside those we encounter in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania. And we're particularly grateful for the opportunity for a number of our sisters to host a 4-day pilgrimage to Bruny Island, to ensure the spirit, vision and mission of our founder, Fr John Wallis, and our pioneering women, continues on into the future. We pray you and your loved ones enjoy the peace, hope and blessings of Christmas, and a safe holiday period, and start to 2023. Our office will be closed throughout January 2023.

### FR JOHN WALLIS HERITAGE TRAIL AND CELEBRATION OF 90-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ORDINATION

The founder of the MSS, Fr John Corcoran Wallis, is originally from Yea, in country Victoria, about an hour and a half's drive from our Melbourne sisters. Born in 1910, ordained a priest at 22-years for the Archdiocese of Hobart in December 1932, we celebrate and acknowledge his 90-year anniversary of ordination on 18 December 2022. We have much so much to be grateful for! And the fact that he established our community of women in 1944, we're so fortunate that all of us MSS knew and loved Fr John in our years of formation and service. He died on 3 August 2001, aged 91.

A great way that his niece, Bernadette Wallis MSS, continues to share the story, vision and legacy of her uncle has been through her latest book, *Dear Mother Dear Father: Letters Home from John Corcoran Wallis 1927-1949*.

Helping to bring these 100 letters to life, Bernadette led a group of 12 people on 'The John Wallis Heritage Trail, Yea', which focussed on his family and early life, and his seminary days until he goes to Tasmania. Throughout the day, the group travelled to various sites of significance in Yea and surrounding areas, including Sacred Heart Church, to see the Baptism registry, which features John's details; the hospital where John was born; his local primary school and family home; and the cemetery where his parents are buried (top right photo).

In keeping the memory of Fr John alive, the MSS hope to host this event each year, so if you're interested in a future outing, please contact us. Read the full story and see many more photos from the day on our website, in our News section: Deepening connection on the John Wallis Heritage Trail.



Bernadette Wallis at the Box Hill site.

The MSS are excited to announce that we are part of the new **Australian Religious Archive**, with four other religious congregations (to date), which will be cared for and managed by the University of Divinity in Box Hill, Victoria. The Archive is designed to hold the story, history and legacy of religious congregations and other religious groups who have made significant contributions to both civic and church life in Australia and beyond. It will hold and honour the stories and vision of those groups who are considered to have played a foundational role in the establishment and development of pastoral, health, education and social services entities in Victoria and beyond, and will serve as a valuable research facility for future generations. Read the full story on our website, in the News section.

## 2022 Bruny Island Pilgrimage

As we gathered on Bruny Island, off the southern coast of Tasmania, for four days of pilgrimage, we acknowledged that we walked on the traditional land of the Nuenonne People of the south-eastern tribes. In this spirit, some of the MSS hosted new staff and board members of our mission entity, Highways and Byways – Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves, Together, and friends of our community, both locally and from interstate.

Bruny Island holds a special place in the history of our congregation and our founder, Fr John Wallis – it was here, back in 1933 that a young Fr John, newly ordained for the Archdiocese of Hobart, met a young woman and mother of four children, Kit Hawkins, who asked the fledgling priest: What about us? Doesn't anyone care about us in the bush? This sparked something within Fr John's heart, so that, 11 years later, on 8 July 1944 in Launceston, Tasmania, the first four women came together to become the foundation of our community, with two more joining later that year.

Located at a campsite on Adventure Bay, on the eastern side of Bruny Island, each morning and afternoon, we gathered to listen and reflect upon John's letters to his mother, as he shared his experiences in visiting isolated families on the island. We heard his descriptions of the rugged landscape, the flora and fauna, which he keenly observed and documented, and how he made the long trips across the island by foot, horse and cart. We walked each day, too, climbing up 250m along the Fluted Cape track, and the next day, along the Luggaboine Circuit track on the Labillardiere Peninsula. We visited Cape Bruny lighthouse, recalling John's experience of befriending the lighthouse keeper's family all those years ago, and how these visits initiated what was to become the correspondence school.

We reflected on the beginnings of the MSS community, listened to stories shared by those of our sisters who were present, as well as friends of the community sharing their encounters and friendships with our women. And on the final day, we heard stories of how our work has evolved over the years, and also, how our mission entity, Highways and Byways (formerly the John Wallis Foundation), is carrying on the vision, mission and spirit of our community, in practical ways. We joined with locals at St Brendan's Catholic Church in Alonnah, on the Sunday, and said our farewells on the Monday. For all who continue to join in our spirit of going out into the highways and byways, we say thank you. We hope to host these pilgrimages every two or three years, so perhaps we'll see you there some time!



**Left:** Mary Williams (Highways and Byways, Hobart Branch); Stancea Vichie MSS (Congregational Leader); Tracy Thomas (Bruny Island Historical Society Coordinator); Bernadette Wallis MSS; and Corrie van den Bosch MSS. The society was presented with a display book that showed one of Fr John's letters describing his experience on Bruny Island.

**Top right and middle:** Our group of hikers trekked along the Fluted Cape circuit track while another group enjoyed the flatter walk to Grass Point and Penguin Island (right, middle).  
**Bottom:** The campsite shed at Adventure Bay became our 'HQ' for morning and afternoon reflections.

*The pilgrimage was held on Bruny Island, Tasmania, from 24-28 November 2022.*



## Bruny Island Pilgrimage 2022 in Photos



**Top row, from left:** The pilgrimage group on the Luggaboine Circuit walking track; Pilgrimage coordinator, Bernadette Madden MSS and Corrie van den Bosch MSS; the pilgrimage group in South Bruny National Park, having walked the very steep Fluted Cape circuit track.

**Second row, from L:** Catherine Carr (MSS Coordinator), Mary Heinemann and Brian Lennon (Highways and Byways board member); Catherine Carr and Judy Cain (Highways and Byways Small Grants committee member) lead the walking pack; Bernadette Hogan (Highways and Byways board member), and Lorraine Groves MSS, who lives in Hobart.

**Third row, from L:** Dennis Cooper fms and Denis Fitzgerald (patron of Highways and Byways); the pilgrimage group outside St Brendan's Catholic Church, Alonnah, where we celebrated Mass on the first Sunday of Advent; Hobart priest, Fr Graeme Howard, a long-time friend of Fr John Wallis.

**Fourth row, from L:** Martin Allen (Highways and Byways board member) with Bernadette Wallis MSS and Bernadette Madden MSS in the background; Mary Williams (Highways and Byways Hobart branch member) and Liz McAloon (former executive officer of Highways and Byways); Fiona Basile (MSS media and communications coordinator) pointing out the Fluted Cape walking destination; Cape Bruny lighthouse; the person up the very top is Jane Collopy (Highways and Byways executive officer).

## Mary Cleary MSS, grateful for a life of travel, mission, and being with the people

This year, Mary Cleary celebrated the diamond jubilee (60-year anniversary) of when she first joined the MSS. She was 22 years old, and had moved from her hometown of Warwick, a town about 130 kilometres south-west of Brisbane, Queensland, to join the community down south, in Hobart. In two and a half years, she'll be celebrating the 60-year anniversary of her first profession. Reflecting on her life, Mary acknowledges there is much to celebrate, but also wonders where all the years have gone! 'It's been a wonderful experience for me—all those years, all those places that I've been to, and the people I've met along the way, which I wouldn't have experienced had I not been an MSS,' she said.



Over the years, Mary has served in pastoral settings in Scottsdale, St Mary's and Beaconsfield, Tasmania; in Parkes, New South Wales; in Whyalla, South Australia; and Toowoomba, Queensland. However, it was her 11 and a half years in the Jandowae parish (1999-2011), located in the Western Downs Region of Queensland, about 130km northwest of Toowoomba, where she served as pastoral leader, which holds a special place in her heart. As well as serving in her own Church community, she assisted in other denominations, too. For instance, she officiated at a funeral for both the Anglican and Uniting Churches. 'I was involved in so much in the town and I think that's what made it so special; Jandowae was a little country town, but it had quite an extensive country area surrounding it, where we had parishioners living,' Mary explained. 'It was wonderful to be in the one place for so long and to get to know the people really well, and to see them regularly. It was a tremendous grace to be there with them, to accompany them in all of their joys and sorrows, their ups and downs. That was a really special blessing.' Mary often marvelled at the openness of the people she met, and their trust in sharing their lives and stories with her.

Eleven years ago, Mary retired and has lived in Toowoomba, ever since. She is grateful that she still enjoys good health and can continue serving in her local community. Mary is spiritual adviser to the Cathedral St Vincent de Paul society, is part of local social justice groups, and regularly attends classes at U3A (University of the Third Age). She enjoys pottering in her vegetable patch and tending to her many flowers in the garden. She's also grateful that there are several other MSS who live nearby, who she visits regularly. 'We catch up fairly regularly, for birthdays and anniversaries, and things—though, we don't need much of an excuse to get together!'

She is also grateful for her family—her parents, and sister—and for all the opportunities she's had in life both before joining the MSS, and afterwards. Tragically, Mary's parents were killed in a car crash in 1975, only weeks after she'd arrive in Whyalla to work in the Port Pirie Diocese in South Australia (she was 34 years old). 'That was the most extraordinary experience of how I got home from Whyalla back to Warwick, with a plane that only landed in the little country town once a week and it happened to be the day that I needed to get to Adelaide. And then to get the last seat on the plane from Adelaide to Brisbane. There were a whole series of things that happened that got me back to Brisbane that night. And then my cousin took me home to Warwick the next day. I'm so grateful for how so many people rallied around to get me home. I look back now and think, "God, how did I do it?" but somehow I did it, and I survived it all, but it was an extraordinary time.'

'I really have so much to be grateful for: I have a heart for travelling, so I found the right spot with MSS, although, it was really the people at the end of the long distances that made the traveling worthwhile. I've just been so grateful to arrive at where we had to go and to always arrive home, safely. That's been a great blessing.'



### JOHN WALLIS COLLECTION IN CARE OF ARCHDIOCESE OF HOBART

In a small ceremony at the Wallis Centre in Hobart, on 29 November, the Missionary Sisters of Service officially donated John Wallis' extensive library of books to the care of the Archdiocese of Hobart. At the ceremony, his niece Bernadette Wallis MSS shared stories of John's love of books, which nurtured his relationship with God and shaped his spirit and vision. Corrie van den Bosch MSS, who has spent much time in the MSS archives helping to sort and catalogue the books provided a presentation of the treasured books that could be found on the shelves. Congregational leader, Stancea Vichie MSS, formally handed over the library to archdiocesan staff Chris Ryan, executive director of the archdiocese and Eloise Armstrong, archdiocesan archivist (featured in the photograph).