

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

Happy Easter!

We have had a wonderful start to the year at Highways and Byways, having received some really exciting applications for our Small Grants Program for 2023, *Healing and Growing Together*. The Projects Committee and Board all agreed that our regional and remote communities across Australia are still suffering the after effects of drought, bushfires, floods and Covid19. We wanted to ensure our grant support was available to those attempting to heal and grow from these challenges, particularly to restore social and ecological wellbeing and to continue fostering Indigenous identity and cultural connections. We thank all of you for your generous support of this program through your donations and messages of encouragement – each one makes a real difference!

Our longer-term programs in Roma and north-eastern Tasmania are all on track to make significant developmental

change for their local communities. I was fortunate to visit Tasmania in January 2023 to meet with both Todd Dudley who runs our *Restoring Nature and Communities* program, and Tani Langoulant from *Free2b Girls*.

Restoring Nature and Communities

Todd showed me the vast area of land the project has restored across the Break O'Day municipality. I met with some of Todd's team and could see the positive impact that both the employment and work itself has had on their lives. I'm so impressed by the way such a relatively small project can have such a big positive impact on the individuals involved, the community as a whole, the environment and all those who hear about it. The project is a great example of taking a wholistic ecological perspective on how we can live; benefiting the people, the land and the local economy of a small community.

Free2B Time

It was also wonderful to meet Tani who is running the *Free2b Time* program in 2023 with Highways and Byways. Tani has been growing the Free2b Girls organisation for the last few years, supporting teenage girls who are isolated by their remote location in St Helens, Tasmania, by providing a safe space where the girls can connect with supportive adults in a group setting. The program has been so effective that other small communities have replicated it and asked Tani to develop and run training for them. The *Free2B Time* program has developed in St Helens to respond to the needs of many

2023 YARCK TO YEA WALK/RIDE/RUN

Our 2023 Yarck to Yea Walk/Ride/Run will occur on **Saturday 19 August 2023**.

This is a community event to raise funds to support the work of Highways and Byways.

Join us to ride, walk or run the Great Victorian Rail Trail between Yarck and Yea. Complete the entire 27km trail, or choose your starting point according to the distance you wish to walk or run. Celebrate your achievement at a BBQ lunch hosted by the Yea Catholic community.

Further information including starting times, locations and ticketing will be made available closer to the event date.

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR E-NEWSLETTER

Last 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 your email address to newsletter@hb.org.au or call Jo Winton on (03) 9087 2039.



of the girls for more 1:1 support. This is especially needed as they face the end of local schooling which finishes at Year 10, adding extra pressures of leaving home to continue their education or find employment. Tani's passion and vision for the work is inspiring, to say the least!

Seeds of Connection

Our *Seeds of Connection* program in Roma (south-east Queensland) has again received generous grant support from *Mary MacKillop Today* for three of its projects in 2023. Megan will run the first *Healing and Belonging through Culture* program for Indigenous women at the sacred site of the Yamba in Mitchell. The women will be welcomed and invited to connect with each other, to have the rare opportunity to share their life stories and hopefully experience the healing that comes from sharing about the struggles they have faced in maintaining and passing on their cultural identity, language and practices, particularly regarding women's business.



Finally, I would like to advise that the Board of Highways and Byways has appointed Helen Casey as a new Board Director. Helen brings a wealth of experience across all areas of business and

the not-for-profit sector. We are very grateful for the contributions she has already made, and look forward to 2023 and beyond.



IMAGE: New Board member, Helen Casey.

TOUCH, FEEL & SMELL THE SURROUNDS

DRAKE, NSW

Gardeners at the Drake Village Women's Shed wanted to cater for most folk in the small NSW town when they developed their community garden with support from Highways and Byways.

Using three newly built raised garden beds they planted up pollinator, sensory and medicinal gardens, offering something for everyone. It's an important addition to the town, which was badly hit by the 2019 fires.

Suki Shea, from the Women's Shed said the garden, which is coming along well, offers something for most ages, but especially for the Blue Banded, native and European bees, ensuring other plants in the area can be pollinated.

About 15 Shed members and various community members worked on establishing the garden, which is now maintained by seven regular members and keen gardeners, including Suki. Backtrack Youth Works, a local community group, also helped get the gardens up and running.

The garden is at the town hall, which is used by a range of

other services including a local play group, which the Shed members had in mind during the planning. "We planted things that the children will enjoy touching and smelling. We believe it can be very calming for some children if they are distressed, to be around this sort of garden," Suki said.

Locals are encouraged to visit the garden and take cuttings from medicinal plants such as Comfrey, Mugwort and Aloe Vera and try and grow the plant at home for their own use.

Suki said many in the town and surrounding areas have been traumatised by the fires, which destroyed several homes, as well as recent floods, COVID lockdowns and a mouse plague.

"Lockdowns were hard on many women who are isolated on nearby properties. We really encourage them to come and visit the gardens, be part of the Women's Shed or activities we run. Even if someone has lost a lot of energy because of the events of the last few years, they throw a few seeds in the dirt and watch something grow. That can be very healing."



IMAGE: Volunteers from the Drake Village Women's Shed and Backtrack Youth Works plant out a new garden bed.

CHANGING TIMES FOR FARMERS

GOONDIWINDI, QUEENSLAND

Louise Carroll cites a worm farm as the highlight of the recent regenerative cropping field day she helped organise. Not your average domestic worm farm, but a massive purpose-built worm farm producing enough material to contribute to crop fertilisation at Kioma Station in southern Queensland.

The field day at Kioma Station, held with support from Highways and Byways, involved more than 90 farmers who came to hear other local farmers showcase what regenerative cropping practices they were using on their farms and the results they were yielding.



IMAGE: Land managers learn about regenerative cropping at a field day at Kioma Station.

Louise, from Macintyre Ag Alliance, a not-for-profit organisation based at Goondiwindi, said the expertise shared inspired some farmers to look into what could be done incrementally on their farms to increase productivity. Issues discussed focused on soil health and included homebrew bio-fermented extracts, livestock and worm farms.

"Farmers got to see how a local farm is successfully using regenerative practices to improve the soil. They also learnt how they could implement the practices and some of the challenges they would face along the way," Louise said.

Louise said another benefit of the field day was the opportunity for farmers to gather, strengthen their networks and gain confidence to embark on something that is new and possibly overwhelming.

"Farmers in our network rarely have the opportunity to step away from their farms for learning, so these sorts of events may strengthen rural communities and are also good for farmers' mental health. For many at the field day, it was an eye opener of what's possible," Louise said. The local farmers survived crippling drought before the last two years of good rain. However, Louise said it has been several months since the last rain and some are now anxious about the coming season.

While the field day was an in-person event, it has led to the development of resources that farmers can access at the Macintyre Ag Alliance website. As well, the Alliance has a What's App group where farmers can seek advice.

"Just this week a farmer posted that he had received rotten grain and asked the group for composting suggestions. A farmer responded that he had used it on his buffel grass to improve the soil," Louise said.

PROTECTING NATURE'S NATURAL BEAUTY

BROULEE, NSW

Lynn Bain wears a few hats around the beautiful NSW coastal town of Broulee, including "Rubbish Queen" and "Weed Lady". She and a group of volunteers can often be found pulling weeds, replanting and picking up rubbish from Mossy Point to Moruya Airport, including the North Broulee beach dunes.

The locals care deeply about the state of the foreshore around the pristine beaches. North Broulee beach was burnt in the 2019/20 fires that ravaged parts of NSW. The Broulee Mossy Point Dunecare volunteer group, which was already active before the fires, is restoring the native vegetation to its pre-fire environment, with support from Highways and Byways.

The walking track fences have been rebuilt and signage installed with the help of Eurobodalla Shire Council. The native vegetation has been replanted heavily to encourage people to stay on the path to the beach. Lynn and her team are vigilant at destroying introduced weeds, including Asparagus Fern, Bridal Veil Creeper and African Daisies, that can smother native vegetation and take over. Unfortunately, many visitors to the area also leave rubbish along the foreshore that Lynn and many others pick up on their morning walks.

"It was a big job replanting the foreshore with native plants after the fires. We planted about 160 endemic species and will be planting more in autumn," Lynn said.

The fire caused a lack of ground cover so introduced species and rubbish aren't the only enemies of the foreshore. Revegetation to prevent erosion is a long-term 'maintenance' challenge.

"We are planting along the foreshore and dunes to increase biodiversity and protect the environment from the long-term

erosion effects of sea level rise," she said.

Lynn became convener of Broulee Mossy Point Dunecare in 2010 when she moved permanently to the area after holidaying there for 40 years. It was a change of scenery, but much the same work as she did as a participant in her rural Landcare group for many years as a farmer. Between 10 and 20 Landcarers gather regularly to work on the foreshore and elsewhere to protect the endangered ecological community Bangalay Sand Forest.



IMAGE - New plantings to re-establish vegetation at North Broulee foreshore.

BIOBLITZ SHOWCASES LAKE PEDDER POSSIBILITIES

LAKE PEDDER, TASMANIA

Tabatha Badger's work takes her to the magnificent Pedder Impoundment in Tasmania and the halls of Parliament House in Canberra. It's for the same purpose; the restoration of the original, World Heritage Listed, Lake Pedder. It's the same reason more than 40 Australians from as far away as Queensland travelled to Tasmania recently to join the Bioblitz, organised by Lake Pedder Restoration Inc and supported by Highways and Byways.

The Bioblitz, or citizen science project, studied and surveyed various parts of Lake Pedder including a disused 18km-walking track, the impoundment shoreline, vegetation and fauna, to develop an understanding of the environmental risks and opportunities for restoring the area.

"Before it was dammed in 1972 Lake Pedder was an Australian icon like Uluru and the Great Barrier Reef. This restoration project is a great opportunity for the environment," Tabatha said.

The volunteers, led by experts from wilderness groups and University of Tasmania environmentalists, walked and kayaked, collecting data across 12 sites, including the once popular 18km track.

"Over the two-day Bioblitz, our various groups, with different areas of expertise, collected a comprehensive data set across 12 sites, successfully finding vast evidence of the endangered Tasmanian Devil, Spotted and Eastern quolls, threatened Tasmanian Masked Owl and White-bellied Sea Eagle. They also mapped threats, predominantly Spanish Heath," Tabatha said.

"The data we collected will have an impact on future work at Pedder. The area where evidence of endangered species has been found means that the area cannot be used to house machinery used for the dam's ongoing maintenance. It must be a protected habitat."

Another Bioblitz will be held in late 2023 and comparisons can be made. One important area that will be studied in the next Bioblitz will be land adjacent to the walking track damaged by fires a month or so after the Bioblitz. It will look at what species have regenerated.

Tabatha said advocacy work often done in Canberra, will try and have the 18km track, which takes in the beautiful Coronet Ranges, upgraded and promoted to the public.



IMAGE - Participants of the Lake Pedder Bioblitz on the perimeter of Lake Pedder.

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SMALL GRANT VIDEO

KIDS CARING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN WA

Highways and Byways has partnered with small grant recipient Busselton-Dunsborough Environment Centre in Western Australia to create a short video which showcases its work to rehabilitate bushland within degraded areas of Barnard Park East.

The video features project manager Silke Rothkamm who highlights the outcome of youth-focused community day that involved planting out 780 native seedlings and raising awareness of the importance of native wildlife and its habitat. The event formed part of a long-term project to transform Barnard Park East into a nature-based area open to the local community, alongside a protected conservation area for the critically endangered Western Ringtail Possum and other wildlife.

You can watch the video on our website or scan the QR code following on your mobile device:

<https://hb.org.au/kids-caring-for-the-environment-in-wa/>



2022 ANNUAL REPORT

We have recently released our Annual Report for 2022. Last year was a terrific year for Highways and Byways despite the ongoing challenges of the Covid19 pandemic. We experienced continued growth in our partnership and small grants programs, and welcomed the return of face to face meetings and events. We also relocated offices, bid a sad farewell to many long-term staff members, and warmly welcomed new employees to the team.

You can read our Annual Report on our website or scan the QR code following on your mobile device:

<https://hb.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022-Annual-Report.pdf>



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MISSIONARY SISTERS OF SERVICE

A mission of love and service into the highways and byways

Volume 56 No. 1
April 2023

2023: A year of hope for our Indigenous brothers and sisters

Friends, welcome to our first edition of the MSS newsletter for 2023. This is a significant year, as in October, Australians will be called upon to vote in a referendum where we will be asked if we support an Indigenous Voice to Parliament being enshrined in our Constitution. A Voice to Parliament will give Indigenous communities a way to help inform policy and legal decisions that impact their lives. Giving people a say will lead to better long-term results. Embedding a Voice in the Constitution would recognise the special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's history. It will also mean that the Voice to Parliament will remain in place even when Governments change. While further debate and details are being worked out, we MSS celebrate that all of our work and our homes are on the sacred land and waterways of the many cultural groups of the First Nations peoples of Australia.

The MSS stand with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their call for a First Nations Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution. And we accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk together with First Nations people in a spirit which encompasses voice, treaty and truth-telling to ensure a better future for all.

The success of any referendum requires a majority of voters across the nation and a majority of voters in a majority of states—this is known as a double majority. We encourage everyone to ask questions, to read, to listen, and be informed. We have a valuable opportunity to make meaningful reparation for the past, and to build a better future for all.

We pray that in finding common ground and setting aside political differences, we may seize this opportunity to listen and learn, to positively bring into being a time where all in Australia may have life to the full. We recommend visiting the following website as a starting point: www.togetheryes.com.au

An update! The MSS continues to move along with the transition for our services to Emerging Futures Collaborative Limited (EFCL). As mentioned in our April 2022 newsletter, one of the tasks conducted by EFCL is to employ people on our behalf, to support our sisters into the future. We are pleased to share that along with Catherine Carr, who was appointed as our Congregational Coordinator since December 2021, we have also welcomed Emilia Rubin as Administration and Finance Support Officer, and Glenn D'Souza as Congregational Business Manger. We have also welcomed Julia Walsh who is the archives assistant for the next 12 months. We're deeply grateful for the contribution that each of these people make in the lives of our community.



Clockwise from top left: Emilia Rubin, Julia Walsh, Catherine Carr and Glenn D'Souza.

MSS reflections captured on video

For almost 80 years, the MSS has been a presence of God's love and friendship in the lives of countless people whom we've met on the highways and byways of Australia and beyond. At its peak, we had more than 55 women in our community. Today, there are 21 of us—11 in Melbourne, Victoria; six in Toowoomba, Queensland; one in Mackay, Queensland; two in Hobart, Tasmania; and one in Whyalla, South Australia.

Our mission has changed and evolved over the years, from serving in rural and remote areas of Australia, to those on the margins in our larger cities and towns, and in our local neighbourhoods. In order to meet the needs of the time, and in fidelity to our spirit of being flexible and adaptable, we created a mission entity that would carry on our mission into the future: The John Wallis Foundation (established in 2010), which was later renamed to *Highways and Byways—Healing the Land, Healing Ourselves, Together* in 2018. Through its staff, board, volunteers and friends, and the partnerships and small grants program, Highways and Byways continues to support people and projects that express the particular character and spirit that has inspired our community's mission since 1944.

Recognising that our community of women grows smaller each year, and the work of Highways and Byways continues to grow, we wanted to capture some of our reflections on video for future generations. In partnership with Highways and Byways, the MSS has created a series of videos, which can be found on our website in the News section, which currently features several of our Melbourne-based sisters sharing their reflections on a number of questions that speak to who we are as a community of women and the impact that both the people and the land have had on our ministry. Specifically, we reflected on the questions: What drew you to the MSS? What has been the main expression of your mission? And, how would someone know in the future that Highways and Byways is carrying on the spirit, vision and mission of the MSS?

'We hope that the legacy, story and spirit of the MSS will live on in our mission entity, Highways and Byways, and in all of the people who have shared the journey and mission with us. We wouldn't be who we are, or where we are without all of the people who have been part of our lives,' said Stancea Vichie MSS, congregational leader.

The videos can be watched via the News section on our website:

www.missionarysisters.org.au/News



MSS clockwise from top left:

Kath Clune
Bernadette Wallis
Corrie van den Bosch
Stancea Vichie
Betty McManus
Marcia McMahon
Pat Brain
Bernadette Madden

Filming, editing and photos by
Fiona Basile

2023 Fr John Wallis Scholarship Recipient Announced



The MSS are delighted to announce that Geraldine Vytilingam is the recipient of the 2022-2023 Fr John Wallis Scholarship. Geraldine, 23, will use the inaugural scholarship to pursue a Masters of Theological Studies through Catholic Theological College. Geraldine moved from Melbourne to Swan Hill, in Victoria's north earlier this year, to start her new role at St Mary MacKillop College, as faith in action leader. Formerly, she'd been a youth minister and acting director of faith and mission at Catholic Regional College North Keilor.

Upon receiving the scholarship, Geraldine said, 'I am deeply honoured to be the recipient of the Fr John Wallis Scholarship. I am so grateful that my application resonated with you. I feel as though the Lord has called me into rural and regional ministry time and time again, which has been both a surprise and a delight.

'I have felt a stirring to pursue postgraduate studies for a while now, and after some setbacks I was doubting whether this was the vocation God was calling me to. Little did I know that God wanted me to pursue this by firstly learning about the foundations of God and the Church. I am excited to use this knowledge in Catholic Education, the Church and secular society. It's a more beautiful path than I had ever envisioned, and the Missionary Sisters of Service and Stewardship Council are to thank for that. Your generosity is healing, beyond words. Thank you, thank you, thank you!'

Geraldine also recently graduated from The University of Melbourne (Bachelor of Arts, Anthropology and Creative Writing). **Photo above, from left: Gabrielle McMullen (MSS Stewardship council member), Congregational leader Stancea Vichie MSS, Geraldine Vytilingam and Bernadette Wallis MSS.**

Scholarships for two years are being offered by the MSS as part of their legacy and will be managed by the University of Divinity, Melbourne. The first, **The Father John Wallis Scholarship**, focussed on Vatican II–post Vatican II and began in 2023. It was awarded in honour of Fr John's 90th anniversary of ordination (18 December 2022). **The First Australians Scholarship** (for 2023-2024) will commemorate the 5th anniversary of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, honouring the call for Voice Treaty and Truth. In 2024-2025, on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the foundation of MSS, **The Missionary Sisters of Service Scholarship** will focus on women and ecological studies. Find out more in the News section of our website: www.missionarysisters.org.au/News

Words of reflection by Marcia McMahon MSS

My early memories of growing up are good memories, surprisingly profound in hindsight. My parents and the three of us were impacted greatly by the then 'signs of the times'. Now, several years later, I realise that this experience was a strong basis for the choices I have made in life. Being born in the early 1940s, our lifestyle was very much conditioned by the events of that time. Glen Iris, a suburb of Melbourne, was far less sophisticated than now.



Life was ordinary so to speak. Our family was very much involved in 'the Church scene' and yes, politically motivated, which in turn meant we were very much people-orientated. Growing up we did the normal things: sporting, dating and following the then normal patterns of life. For some time, I recalled an article in *The Harvest Magazine* about a group of religious sisters in Tasmania (then called the Rosary sisters), now known as the Missionary Sisters of Service. And the rest is history!

*'May you find the path which will lead you to the highest and truest of yourself.
Hope for perpetual discovery—and trust Life. That's all.'*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

In 1963, I joined the order in Hobart and subsequent years led me along the fascinating journey that has been mine. Vatican II was unfolding and it was so exciting to be in Tasmania at that time. Visiting the east, southern and north coasts was ever so special, meeting such wonderful people, with some stints in the Correspondence School, which I loved, having met many families during visits to parishes.

My life experiences were widened further with time spent in the Toowoomba and Wilcannia-Forbes Dioceses. Having grown up with a dad who educated me in caring for the land and all around, I loved visiting the outback, in particular meeting the people. Both these issues befriended me, and still do. I do love the sea, to visit Phillip Island (The Nobbies) and to take in the moods of the sea! (The photo above is at The Nobbies).

In latter years, I was able to join The Inter Church Industrial Mission here in Melbourne, another real learning curve in my life. Again, with people working in Industry who trusted me implicitly. As a dear friend of mine would often remind me, 'people are important'. To quote a line from Sheila Hancock after her film-making of *Edie*: 'For me, I was aware that something has happened to me — What? My soul?'

Thanks to 'the unconditional companionship of God', our founder John Wallis and the many women who encouraged me to read and live the big maps of life.