

# HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

HEALING THE LAND, HEALING OURSELVES, TOGETHER



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and Byways**

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# NEWSLETTER



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**JANE COLLOPY**

Thank you to you all for your generous support of Highways and Byways throughout 2023.

We have had a wonderful year supporting Australian communities with our *Small Grants Program* to heal and grow with projects that encourage reconnection both to each other and to the land, as well as giving further focused support through our longer-term programs in Roma and north-east Tasmania.

### Seeds of Connection

Megan Brown is busily preparing for a new program on the Sunshine Coast which will offer First Nations women the opportunity to explore their culture and identity, through sharing their personal experiences of their own lives. The *Women's Earth and Healing Retreat* will be held in December, and will involve workshops run by local Elders, and the opportunity to reconnect on sacred land with a day at Nungeena, a sacred site for Indigenous women. We know from research how critical cultural recognition and understanding is for social and emotional well-being of Indigenous Australians, and we saw evidence of this in our program earlier in the year at the Yumba in Mitchell, Queensland. We thank Mary MacKillop Today for supporting this *Seeds of Connection* program so generously!

### Restoring Nature & 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 2024. We deeply value models like this program that foster a truly ecological and regenerative approach; not just looking after the environment for the purposes of future resources and enjoyment, but nurturing the health of people and the land by fostering a connection between them that benefits both. The men enjoy

employment where they are respected as individuals, whilst improving their health and wellbeing by connecting to the land and learning how to look after it for its optimal health.

### Free2b Girls

In 2023, we extended our support to Free2b Girls to enable them to set up their organisation sufficiently to provide direct employment and training of facilitators to support the teenage girls in need of a safe space "2b". As a result, *Free2b Time* has taken off and girls local to the Break O'Day region in north east Tasmania are able to receive individual and group support to navigate the challenges of living remotely. Tani Langoulant and her team witness leaps and bounds in the girls' confidence, self awareness, direction and hope. The facilitators purposefully focus in on the strengths and interests of the girls, and a couple of them have further explored their creative expression through art. One of their beautiful artworks is included below.



## 2024 SMALL GRANTS PROGRAM

Our 2024 Small Grants Program opens for applications on Thursday, 1st February 2024.

Grants up to \$4,000 will be available to community organisations for projects that:

- build strong, resilient and connected communities;
- reduce isolation and loneliness,
- encourage community partnerships and local leaders;
- foster Indigenous identity and cultural connections; and/or
- share knowledge and skills for the sustainable or regenerative management of the environment.

Applications will close on Friday, 15th March 2024.

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

## XMAS/NEW YEAR HOLIDAY OFFICE HOURS

We are taking a short break over the Christmas and New Year period. Our office will be closed from Friday, 22nd December 2023 to Monday, 8th January 2024.



**FRRR**  
Foundation for Rural  
Regional Renewal

IMAGE ABOVE: Judy Cain, Bernadette Wallis mss, Bernadette Garvey, Lorna Slaben and Kevin Garvey at this year's YarcK to Yea Walk/Ride/Run. Image courtesy of Fiona Basile Photography.

We thank Mary MacKillop Today, who generously agreed to support this program into 2024.

We are also very excited to receive funding from the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal to start the *Free2Fly* program which will offer support to young women aged 18-25. This means Free2b Girls will be able to extend and develop their support both to girls who have been supported as teenagers, as well as local young women who are having trouble finding their way.

**2023 Yarck to Yea Walk/Ride/Run**

We enjoyed a beautiful day in country Victoria on Saturday 19th August at our annual *Yarck to Yea Walk/Run/Ride*. Many of our broader Highways and Byways community joined us to make the trek along the Great Victorian Rail Trail, meeting new people and sharing stories of our experiences of the land and our connections to the Missionary Sisters of Service. We particularly thank the Yea Catholic parish community who warmly welcomed us at the end of the event with a magnificent barbeque and spread of homemade treats.

**Toowoomba Memorial Lecture with Rev Tim Costello AO**

Rev Tim Costello AO was this year's guest speaker at the *Toowoomba Memorial Lecture*. I was fortunate enough to join our local branch members and the wider community to hear him speak so passionately about the importance of choosing hope in the turmoil of current times. Rev Costello shared his personal experiences in the Middle East, where amidst the political turmoil he continued to find people willing to put people's humanity ahead of their racial, religious and cultural differences. He also shared his reflections on the outcome of the recent Referendum. Tim encouraged us to focus on the strengths of our communities, noting that 22 of Australia's 25 largest charities are Christian faith-based charities. This highlights the importance of sharing the stories of the work we do, and to this end, we hope you will take action and hand this newsletter on to your family members, friends and the broader community. Given the relatively small size of the Missionary Sisters of Service and now Highways and Byways, we make an incredible difference in the lives of those living remotely around Australia. Apart from wanting to support this work, we hope you want to inspire your friends and family to have hope in these bleak times.

**John Wallis Memorial Lecture with Dr Rev Jake Mudge**

Our Hobart Branch welcomed Dr Rev Jake Mudge as the guest

lecturer for the *2023 John Wallis Memorial Lecture* in October.

In speaking inspiringly on *You are a Chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood: living fully our shared baptismal calling*, Fr Jake highlighted the profound invitation of the Second Vatican Council to cultivate friendship with the living God, who meets us intimately and personally in our daily lives. He used Dominican preacher Timothy Radcliffe's question of how we might "take the plunge" into our shared baptismal calling as heralds and prophets of the good news.

As a Corpus Christi Seminary staff member and Catholic Theological College lecturer, Fr Jake assured listeners that seminary teachers knew Pope Francis' synodal church demanded radical new attitudes and skill sets from future priests. He spoke feelingly about the pitfalls of power relationships, stressing that the only truly authentic priest/laity interface must be vulnerability meeting vulnerability.

The lecture was well attended in person, at Guilford Young College, Glenorchy, and online around Australia.

This, along with the Toowoomba lecture can be viewed through the News section of our website at [www.hb.org.au/news](http://www.hb.org.au/news) or by scanning the relevant QR code located on the back page.

Finally, as we come to the close of another year, I'd like to acknowledge all of our wonderful volunteers who assist with programs, committees and events. A very special thank you goes to retiring Board members Jeffery Byrne and Brian Lennon (pictured below) who have very generously given years of their time and expertise to the Highways and Byways Board, and between the two of them, kept our Administration and Finance Committee focused and astute.



**WADEYE ON THE MEND**

**WADEYE, NT (MURRINH-PATHA COUNTRY)**

There's a patch of Wadeye, a remote outback town south-west of Darwin, that's starting to look pretty good. Two years of weeds, abandoned car parts and town rubbish is disappearing. Slowly, the Thamarrurr Men's Shed is re-emerging thanks to young men working off their court ordered community service hours. The project uses whipper snippers and lawn mowers bought with a grant from Highways and Byways. It is an investment that is paying huge dividends according to Men's Shed coordinator Peter Zambellakis.

"The equipment had been lost, stolen or broken and nothing much had happened for a couple of years so the place looked a mess. We are slowly cleaning it up and making the place a bit more welcoming and then we will start on neighbouring blocks so the machinery will be getting a lot of use," Peter said.

Peter works closely with the young men and allows them to 'be boss' of their work times, often taking time off during the hottest part of the day. Peter is encouraging some of the older men in the community, including one who maintains the mowers, to mentor some of the young men in the *Youth Diversion Program*. Apart from passing on skills, Peter hopes it will nurture respect for the Elders.

"Some of the young fellas that come here to do their community service hours have never had a job, or done any work, so this helps them to get in the habit of turning up and committing to a task. They know they have to complete their hours (90 or 120 hours) in a certain period of time so they can take charge of how that happens," Peter said. One of the participants was so pleased with the work he had done he asked Peter if they could also work on his family's yard.

Wadeye has been in the news in recent years for all the wrong reasons. Almost two years ago many of the town's buildings were damaged during rioting. The 'spruced up' Men's Shed will hopefully be a positive experience for those involved.



IMAGE: a young man uses new tools at Thamarrurr Men's Shed.

## A FOREST OF FOOD

### BYRON BAY, NSW (BUNJALUNG COUNTRY)

Young people and the community around Byron Bay are planting hundreds of trees and creating a fruit food forest. Importantly, they are also learning to improve their environment by nurturing the health of their garden through the use of worm farm produce and permaculture practices.

The Byron Youth Activity Centre (YAC), with support from Highways and Byways, is using part of its crown land property to develop a food forest and spaces where young people can spend time together or with a youth worker. According to YAC worker Rosalie Bryant, the 'forest' is also an important way of combatting the climate anxiety that many young people are now experiencing.

Earlier this year, the youth mental health organisation Orygen and Mission Australia released the findings of a survey of nearly 19,000 young Australians aged 15 to 19. It found over half (51%) identified the environment as one of the most important issues in Australia today, and more than a quarter (26%) reported they were extremely or very concerned about climate change.

According to the report, research suggests climate anxiety can be mitigated through practical actions such as joining groups that are taking action to fight climate change and connecting with nature.

YAC is certainly encouraging young people to be part of the action. Through this year's *Green Thumbs* project, YAC, in partnership with the Byron Community Primary School, planted 310 trees and seedlings. The trees were a mixture of tropical/subtropical and native fruit trees and the seedlings were a mixture of native flowers, herbs and seasonal leafy greens.

About 158 people participated in the *Green Thumbs* project and 104 were young people. "We encouraged young people to grab a tree, a shovel and head out with a youth worker to plant their tree. This offered important moments of connection. They might

not have had a therapeutic conversation while working in the gardens but it created a connection that is there when that person needs a youth worker," Rosalie said.

As well as massive plantings, YAC ran a series of workshops covering soil preparation, worm farms, tree selection, garden maintenance and the role of worms and insects in gardens. "This was a great project and we took the young people along every step of the way," Rosalie said.



IMAGE: Students learn about the importance of bugs and worms to soil health.

## HELPING THE MAGIC HAPPEN

### BALLARAT, VIC (WATHAURONG COUNTRY)

'Just put your hands in the dirt and let the magic happen', is the advice Lou Ridsdale gives the young people at her workshop before they embark on making a mini-garden terrarium. She urges them to have fun, be creative and make something they love, that is theirs to keep. Many of the participants, suffering from mental illness and associated issues, don't have much of their own and little chance to establish a garden. Lou changes that.

Lou, the founder of volunteer-powered Food is Free Inc in Ballarat, doesn't get bogged down in fancy terracotta gardening pots and exotic plants. Instead, she encourages the residents at Barnagnen, a youth residential mental health recovery service in Ballarat, to get their hands in the dirt and connect to nature.

Her recent terrarium-making workshop at Barnagnen, run with support from Highways and Byways, was a great success with participants throwing their energy and creativity into making terrariums using large recycled jars.

"It's a wonderful experience to be part of, watching the young people loving making something that is theirs and they can take with them to whatever place they move onto. It's as if the world fades away for a few hours and they are immersed in their small garden space," Lou said. "There's a lot of evidence about the mental health benefits of gardening and making terrariums also gives people ownership and control of their little garden space."

As well as creating their terrariums, Lou also talks about keeping plants alive and how they have to have food, water and the right place to stay alive. "It's a message these young folks can certainly relate to. I also share information about making gardening cheap and accessible and using what you have to get started."

"When they first walked into the room, they looked horrified at the thought of having to create a small garden. But they thrived and there was so much joy in it for them because they were

given permission to make something that was theirs and there were no rules or expectations about how it should look."

"We then got talking about gardens and how they are lovely places to sit with visitors or just to sit in peace. We decided a garden here at Barnagnen could be that space so that's the project we are now working on. It all came from making mini gardens," Lou said.



IMAGE: Participants of the Food is Free terrarium-making workshop.

## PRO HART WAY SHOWS NEW LIFE

### BROKEN HILL, NSW (WILJALI COUNTRY)

Years of drought have taken a toll on the main roads into Broken Hill in NSW. A census found that more than 1,000 trees have died from 3,000 planted. But Pro Hart Way, the road from town to the airport is bucking the trend thanks to a handful of volunteers from Landcare Broken Hill. With support from Highways and Byways, the group has spent six months regenerating a 1 km patch on both sides of the road in a bid to rescue existing plant life and nurture new shrubs and ground covers.

The group's Treasurer Sharon Hocking said volunteers have worked hard to lift the land's health and to make it look like it once did. They spread 60 tonnes of mulch and planted 80 trees, shrubs and grasses. Kangaroo grass re-appeared after not being seen in years. The group hand waters new plants until they are well-established.

Arguably the group's biggest achievement has been the construction of 120 'leaky dams' that have helped improve soil retention and reduce water runoff in Broken Hill's Regeneration Area. Sharon

said the leaky dams have made a huge difference. Made by weaving dead wood and branches from nearby trees, the leaky dams slow run-off and capture water and nutrients for nearby plants.

"It's such a simple method but so effective; it fills in eroded gullies by catching leaves and silt. The water infiltrates the ground, instead of running away" Sharon said. "This area was denuded; trees were dying or dead; there wasn't a thing growing. Now there are wildflowers and a massive amount of growth in the area."

The project has built partnerships with the Broken Hill Council and Essential Energy, which supplies mulch made from lopped trees. Soil carbon and soil quality measures were taken from portions of the project, as part of understanding how to improve soils across western NSW. Soil carbon and soil quality increased markedly in under 12 months.

The group continues to care for Pro Hart Way and is now taking on regeneration of Broken Hill's Imperial Lakes.



IMAGE: Wildflowers have bloomed in the Broken Hill Regeneration Area

## HAVE YOU CONSIDERED A BEQUEST TO HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS?

A gift in your Will is a simple way in which you can support the legacy of the Missionary Sisters of Service through the work of Highways and Byways.

You can make a bequest in various ways including specifying an amount of money or a percentage of your assets to pass on

to Highways and Byways.

You can consult with your solicitor when preparing your Will, or Highways and Byways is happy to assist you if require.

Please contact our office if you need advice or are considering a bequest.

### LET'S CONNECT

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## A NEW REPORT ON SMALL GRANTS ACHIEVEMENTS

If you enjoy reading about the great work of our small grant recipients in our newsletter, be sure to have a look at our latest report which provides a more comprehensive review of the projects we funded last year.

They include diverse range of projects, from land and water rehabilitation and restoration initiatives to projects engaging and mentoring youth. All brought the community together in some way, whether it be at local gardens or at workshops or events, and many focused on building capacity and supporting local leaders. A strong element of many was the recognition and protection of Indigenous wisdom, especially in relation to land management and cultural burning.

You can read the report by visiting the News section of our website:

[www.hb.org.au/news](http://www.hb.org.au/news)

or by scanning the QR code right on your device.



## VIEW OUR LECTURES



To watch this year's **Toowoomba Memorial Lecture** scan the QR code left on your device.

To watch the **2023 John Wallis Memorial Lecture** scan the QR code right on your device.



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Highways and Byways is a national charity established by the Missionary Sisters of Service to support people and communities experiencing disadvantage and inequality across Australia.

We do this through our annual small grants and longer-term programs. Our programs are designed to strengthen community relationships and networks, develop local leadership, and empower people to meet the challenges confronting them.

Highways and Byways is a registered charity with the Australian Charities and Not-For-Profits Commission.

ABN: 87 622 436 551

