

Highways and Byways

Newsletter of
The John Wallis Foundation

PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132



Greetings!

And welcome to our 1st edition of *Highways and Byways* for 2017.

This year the Foundation is embarking on an exciting partnership with the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) a national organisation set up in 1999 by the Federal Government to work with philanthropy and business to support rural communities socially, economically, environmentally and culturally. FRRR will manage and administer the 2017 John Wallis Foundation Small Grants Program, enabling us to develop larger projects and partnerships in our efforts to continue to grow the Foundation. We will still be in contact with all those who receive grants to see how the projects are going and to keep our donors and supporters informed.

Here in the John Wallis Foundation office, as with 2016, we began the year with a stark reminder of the harsh reality of many people's lives across this beautiful and tough country.

180 applications to our 2017 Small Grants Program portrayed a picture of poverty, disadvantage and stress in many rural communities. The applications also however, gave a picture of innovation, collaboration and sometimes just great imagination – outlining creative ideas and strategies to address the challenges.

We are always aware that it is you our donors and supporters who enable us to do the work of supporting such struggling communities. We will only be able to fund a small proportion of the grant applications, but we are growing each year and hope that 2017 brings us more supporters.

In this edition of *Highways and Byways*, we tell you a little of the impact that donations to the John Wallis Foundation can make in some communities across Australia, and one international project. Each one reflects the enormous volunteer contribution and leadership that goes hand-in-hand with successful community endeavours.

Liz McAloon
Executive Officer

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STOP PRESS!

John Wallis Memorial Lecture in Toowoomba

Fr. Frank Brennan SJ will
present this lecture on
Sunday 7 May 2017.

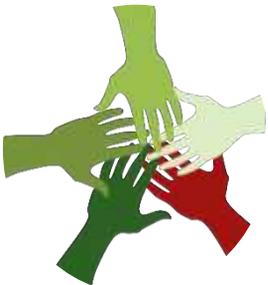
For information and
bookings ring 0422 462 678
or email

marycleary5@bigpond.com

into the highways and byways

The John Wallis Foundation continues the vision and mission of
the Missionary Sisters of Service





Sharing wisdom, skills and friendship



Karen brings mums together

Mt Druitt, NSW

Karen Syed never thought of herself as a leader, but elders in the Mt Druitt based Baabayn Aboriginal Cooperative, did. They asked Karen, a young local woman, to coordinate a group for young mums and babies, and the John Wallis Foundation supported her position with \$2400.

The trial is now a weekly Wednesday gathering of young mums, as well as grandmothers from the area and Karen is still coordinator. Some weeks were challenging as the group struggled to establish a core of between six and 10 'regulars', but their achievements have been significant.

"Some of the mums who come are really isolated and they have a lot going on in their lives. The group supports them as parents, and as women," Karen said.

Through the group all participants got their first aid certificate, obtained their L plates for driving and children's immunisations were updated. As well, health talks were arranged and the women took turns to cook the Wednesday lunch using healthy recipes and information.

The elders' faith in Karen has also paid off as she emerges as a leader within the group, speaking at external events and raising funds for more Baabayn initiatives.

"We started as young mums but soon some grandmothers came and that's been an important connection between the generations. The older women have a lot to offer," she said.

"A lot of our mums are single and with some big problems. This group brings them to a place where there is support, a lot of support."



Makers take a stand at market

Dallas, Victoria

There's some new makers on the block at the Dallas Community Hub and their wares will soon be for sale. Beaded jewellery, made by women who attend the hub's weekly coffee/craft club, will be on sale at an upcoming Dallas Brooks Community Primary School market at the invitation of the school's principal.

The jewellery 'collection' is the culmination of months of making by the women, all newly arrived migrants and refugees. Machinery and some materials for the club were purchased with a \$1600 grant from the John Wallis Foundation.



The women began in the club sewing garments and learning to alter clothes using a newly purchased overlocker, a sewing machine donated by the school and a bit of know-how from a school staff member, whose time was donated by the school.

The exchange of ideas and the developing relationships and support networks are icing on the cake for hub coordinator Gail Hart, who instigated the coffee/craft club almost a year ago after a community consultation.

As well as the sewing, knitting and jewellery making, Gail believes the affirmation shown by the school community is important. The women see themselves as a valued part of the school and wider community.

"A lot of the women are very isolated at first and the weekly club is so relaxed that they feel welcomed," Gail said. "When you are making things and teaching one another, language isn't a barrier."

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PO Box 2075 Rangeview Vic 3132

E jwadmin@johnwallisfoundation.org.au

(03) 9873 5520

www.johnwallisfoundation.org.au





Smashing the sound of silence

Tasmania

Imagine being deaf, or hearing impaired, and spending your school days in a hearing community, where no other children understand what it is like to not be able to hear properly. Then a group of committed teachers decide to get all the deaf and hearing-impaired kids in Tasmania together for a weekend of fun and friendship. Suddenly the world changes and it might never be the same again!



Thirty-five children, from all over Tasmania, participated in the three-day camp in Hagley in November, with support from the John Wallis Foundation. Teacher Suzanne Bullock swears she has never seen so many happy students in all her years of teaching.

"These kids were surrounded by other kids who truly understand what they are experiencing. There is no dedicated school for the deaf in Tasmania so many of the kids are isolated. Great relationships were formed and the kids are asking when the next camp will be held," Suzanne said.

Savannah, 9, agreed, "It was good to meet more deaf people. There were lots of people signing, it was great."

Over the weekend, with \$2000 John Wallis Foundation funding an artist worked with the students, aged from Year 2 to Year 12, to make kites and bandanas. Photos were put on a disc and given to each participant and information about the latest technology was also distributed. The camp also gave hearing-impaired children the opportunity to pick up some sign language from new friends. They also exchanged addresses to continue communication in whatever way works for them. Suzanne hopes the next camp will be in 2018.

Country women stick together

Port Augusta, South Australia

The eighty-year-old Port Augusta Country Women's Association was on the brink last year. The few women left, including two life members, and the new single mums who had joined, had no way of getting to meetings. The group faced closure.

But the members did what the CWA have always done; they went into battle for countrywomen, finding ways to keep them connected to the community. And with \$1500 from the John Wallis Foundation they set up a taxi account and ensured the women without transport could get to meetings. At the same time they ran a membership drive and attracted a group of women, many professional women, who have added new energy and ideas to the branch.



The Port Augusta CWA is now renewed, and its older members, many in their late 80s, still have a place. "There's a lot of history and information to be found in the meeting minutes of the Association. But the spirit of the group is found in its members and we were determined to hold on to ours," said Roz Hartley, the recently elected President.

There are 15 members now and their commitment is as strong as ever. They meet monthly and gather weekly for lunches and craft groups. The women also run cooking classes for the local high school students and put together kits for children who have been placed into state care. They are also now fundraising so that the tyranny of distance won't jeopardise their branch again.





Changing the world.....

...little by little, one voice at a time



Pushing against the tide

Kiribati



Pacific Calling Partnership (PCP) worker Maria Timon Chi-Fang shares the grief of many of the young people she helped train in Kiribati last year. Like them, she knows the threat climate change poses to the country she still calls home.

"They know it might disappear," said Sydney-based Maria, who along with PCP Co-ordinator Jill Finnane, ran a three-day workshop in Kiribati last year for 20 young people. Maria knows that empowering the young people from these Pacific Island nations to take on the climate change battle is more important than ever.

The workshops, first held in 2015 and then again last year with \$2000 support from the John Wallis Foundation, involved young people from 11 NGOs and youth organisations on the islands. They learnt about climate change, how to develop presentations, lobbying techniques and media skills. The capacity building enables them to lobby locally, but also provides them with the skills needed to be part of the international movement. Important networks were formed amongst the participants.

Two young people who attended last year's workshop and two from Tuvalu are coming to Australia in April for a two week international advocacy training program on climate change, advocacy and leadership. Part of the intensive training by PCP (an initiative of the Edmund Rice Centre in Sydney) will involve advocacy meetings with MPs and other key organisations.

Ongoing mentoring is provided to the young advocates once they return home.

Volunteers create pathways

Broadmeadows, Victoria

Women came to the Meadows Primary School Community hub last year to make stars as part of a global movement against family violence. Hub coordinator Maureen Leahy set up the ribbons and materials for the one-hour session. It lasted all day.

The women, all part of the Meadows Volunteer Pathway project, did more than just create a community display, they explored issues around family violence, broke down a few cultural myths and learned how to support others who are living with violence.

"The setting was welcoming and no one felt threatened. As we made stars, the question kept coming up, 'do you think violence against women is okay?'" Maureen said.

The display, created with some of the \$500 funding from the John Wallis Foundation, hung in the school's welcome area, triggering important conversations that are still going on.

Last year 180 volunteers participated in a range of programs and 20 are currently involved. Employment and training are a focus, but it may take several years for participants to reach that point. Many are isolated in the community and may not have worked in paid employment for years. But Maureen takes every opportunity to connect the volunteers to the community.



"We don't tell the volunteers what they should do, but we help them develop the skills and confidence to make choices," she said. "For many this is about feeling connected to the school community to support their child's education, for others it is finding work."

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Growth, Change and a New Look

Have you noticed our new look? **Highways & Byways**, the JWF part of it, has a new editor, Rosie Hoban, with artwork created by Jacinta Lithgow. The fresh look is not just about image. It is a sign of the growth and maturing of the John Wallis Foundation.

After many years as editor of *H&B* covering stories from both Missionary Sisters of Service and the John Wallis Foundation, the time has come for me to hand over the editor's reins of the JWF part of *Highways & Byways*.

It is not quite seven years since the launch of the Foundation. Its growth and maturing has been an amazing achievement, thanks to its dedicated Board and its energetic Executive Officer, Liz McAloon.

In its earliest years, the Foundation was reliant on MSS for much of the practical aspects of its development. Today the JWF Board has found its feet. The outreach of the Foundation has grown enormously. The JWF is assuming much more of the work involved in growing itself and its mission. We MSS can step back a little from the practical work. The new editorship is a sign of that development.

MSS are, of course, still very much part of the life of the Foundation, including as Board members and as members of JWF branches in Hobart, Melbourne and Toowoomba. MSS and JWF are one in mission, but each body has its own role.

So it is with some regret and much confidence in this new time, that I say goodbye to editing the John Wallis Foundation part of the Newsletter. However, I will continue to edit the Missionary Sisters of Service pages. They will be issued together, but each able to stand alone.

I am very grateful for the trust placed in me over my years as editor. It has given me a privileged insight into the lives and work of the many people involved in growing the Foundation, recipients of grants as well as the MSS whose stories have featured over the years. My prayer and blessings are with Rosie as she assumes her editorship.

Corrie van den Bosch



The Highways and Byways of the 1970s

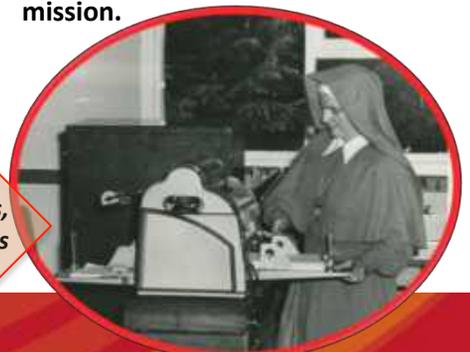
Printing *Rosary House News*, the forerunner of *H&B* 1950s

This Issue:

- Growth & Change
- 50 Years of H&B
- News of MSS
- Doreen Jones: A Creative Approach to Life and Mission

Highways & Byways celebrates its 50th year.

The first issue, published in the mid-1950s under the name of *Rosary House News*, was printed on a Gestetner on quarto paper, using typed stencils with hand-drawn illustrations – a far cry from today's computer productions. In the 1990s *H&B* went into recess, to be resurrected late 2009 in preparation for the launch of JWF which would continue and broaden the MSS mission.





Go Into the Highways and Byways

Stories Revealing Lives Richly Lived

Some years ago we undertook an Oral History Project, recording the history of the Missionary Sisters of Service through the memories of our sisters' experiences, as well as of people among whom they lived and worked.

Fiona Basile undertook to interview each of our sisters, as well as people who have known our sisters through their life and mission. Fiona recorded each interview, then transcribed it for the interviewee to read and correct. The record of interviews will go into our archives, and will be used according to the wishes of the sister whose record it is.

Sisters enjoyed the opportunity to recall their experiences of life and mission as MSS, and to reflect on something of the larger context and understandings of those experiences.

Someday, when the history of the Missionary Sisters of Service is written, these memories will lend human warmth and immediacy to that story, bringing alive the spirit of MSS and their mission into the highways and byways.



Sister Paul Coad mss sharing her story with Fiona Basile

Photo: Fiona Basile

Since this issue of H&B was prepared, our two most senior sisters have completed their life's journeys: Imelda McMahon died in Toowoomba and Paul Coad died in Hobart. Both lived their MSS mission to the full, each in her unique giftedness. We will share their remarkable stories in the next issue of H&B.



A recent photo of Imelda McMahon, by Fiona Basile.

Doreen Jones: "Yer can't miss it, Sister."



Photo: Fiona Basile

'When getting directions in the country or outback, on how to get to people or places, people would tell us where to go and where not to go. They normally concluded with "Yer can't miss it, Sister!" Occasionally we proved we could miss it, but usually we found our way.'

Doreen speaks with great fondness of her early years on the highways and byways in Tasmania and Queensland. She recalls visiting families and their warm welcome. She remembers the women who appreciated the opportunity to share their hopes and concerns with another woman who listened with love, compassion and encouragement. Those years were just the beginning of over fifty years of mission on the highways and byways of life.

In 1970 Doreen did a course at the East Asian Pastoral Institute in Manila, Philippines, an experience that had a profound effect on her personally and on shaping her contribution to the mission. She recalls:

"After EAPI I returned to Tasmania. I started preparing correspondence courses for catechists and parents, as well as for children and families. I also worked in the Catholic Education Office in Hobart, training catechists for teaching children in State schools and organising adult faith education courses, building on the work for which Agnes Ryan and Maria Kavanagh had laid the foundations. This was at a time when Catholic education beyond Catholic schools was still in its infancy in Australia. I worked closely with Father Terry Yard, gave some courses myself, arranged for some of the local priests to teach courses. We also organised retreats for people."

Over the years since Doreen has worked in many places, taking leadership roles in diocesan and parishes ministries. Her vitality and creativity have greatly enriched her various ministries.

Now, aged 82, Doreen's physical energy has diminished, but not her spirit. For her and her MSS sisters, the understanding of mission has grown beyond what we do: it is who we **are**. Each in her own way lives the Good News of God's love, mercy and compassion.

"Yer can't miss it, Sister" is certainly true for Doreen. She has not missed life's opportunities to reach out to people in friendship, with all her care and wisdom and giftedness, to nurture them in faith, trust and confidence.

Doreen and Marie Murphy with first communicants, the climax of a camp at Finch Hatton Qld. in the 1980s.

