

Growing support for ecology project



Hobart Highways and Byways Branch members and Missionary Sisters of Service attend the launch of a partnership in eco-restoration with North East Bioregional Network representatives at St Helens. Pictured are, from left, Nathan Stevenson (NEBN), Sr Bernadette Wallis, Mary-Anne Johnson, Jill Smith, Scott Ryan (NEBN), Eva Dunn (Chair of the Hobart Branch), Sr Frances McShane, Dan Donaldson (NEBN) Mark Wallace (NEBN), Penny Edman, Mary Williams and Chris Smith. Photo courtesy of Penny Edman.

The Missionary Sisters of Service are supporting an ecology project on Tasmania's East Coast, as part of a desire to leave a positive legacy for future generations.

Sr Frances McShane and Sr Lorraine Groves, both of Hobart, together with Sr Bernadette Wallis, of Melbourne, joined more than 70 people at St Helens on World Environment Day in June for the launch of a new partnership program.

Sr Bernadette explained that Restoring Nature and Communities is an MSS Highways and Byways partnership program with the North East Bioregional Network. The 20-week program involves 'ecological restoration' in the Break O'Day municipality, while

offering work and training to four local people.

"While the Sisters are increasing in age, they wish to leave a legacy," Sr Bernadette said.

"Because they travelled the highways and byways, they have known and appreciated the land, the mountains and the sea, the beaches and skies and the beauty of Tasmania. It seems ... as we listen to our land, mountains and hills, and seas and waterways in 2021 that this partnership of Highways and Byways with eco-restoration work is so appropriate."

The project was also a response to a call from Pope Francis on the need for greater environmental care.

"Five years ago, Pope Francis set out a most

important document, *Laudato Si'*, on the Care for Our Common Home," Sr Bernadette said.

"It brought much more awareness and consciousness of the responsibility of stewardship we have as citizens of the world for our environment and our planet. The devastation and destruction we have witnessed in our lifetime calls us to respond now."

Sr Bernadette and Sr Lorraine both served in the St Helens and St Marys areas. Sr Lorraine was heartened by the enthusiastic crowd at the St Helens event, including grant recipients from elsewhere in the state, Hobart Highways and Byways branch members, and bioregional network representatives.

She said the grants exemplified the Sisters' ongoing care and support for rural communities.

"We want the spirit of our founder, Fr John Wallis, to continue on in rural and isolated areas," Sr Lorraine said.

"That is why the Highways and Byways project started - so that we can support small projects in areas where we worked in the past, and also keep our connections alive with those rural areas."

While visiting the East Coast, Sr Lorraine caught up with previous grant recipients, including a program that provides life skills to teenage girls and a garden project at the 'incredible' Fingal Neighbourhood House.