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## **Mary MacKillop Today and Highways and Byways Unite to Strengthen Support for Rural Australia**

Mary MacKillop Today is proud to announce an exciting new chapter in its mission to support those experiencing disadvantage and exclusion, particularly in rural and regional Australia. The Highways and Byways program - the mission entity of the Missionary Sisters of Service (MSS) - has officially transferred to Mary MacKillop Today, forming the Mary MacKillop Today Highways and Byways Program.

This new chapter in mission work follows a growing period of collaboration between the two organisations. Rooted in a long-standing friendship between the MSS and the Sisters of St Joseph, this integration brings together the shared values, history, and dedication of both congregations to deepen impact across Australia.

*“We are deeply grateful for the trust and support both organisations have received over the years,”* said Jane Woolford, CEO of Mary MacKillop Today. *“This development allows the Mary MacKillop Today Highways and Byways Program to expand its reach and strengthen our capacity to make a meaningful and lasting impact across rural and regional Australia.”*

By joining forces, the program will build on the strong legacies of both organisations, particularly honouring the foundational work of the MSS and the John Wallis Foundation, ensuring the continuation of vital community grants and partnerships.

*“The integration of our two mission entities is more than just a structural change—it is a continuation of shared purpose and a deepened commitment to the people who need it most,”* said Sr Stancea Vichie, MSS. *“Through the Mary MacKillop Today Highways and Byways program, this powerful legacy will continue to flourish.”*

The Missionary Sisters of Service remain closely connected to the mission. Recently, Sr Stancea and other key figures from MSS and the Highways and Byways Program met with staff and Board of Mary MacKillop Today in Sydney. The gathering was a heartfelt sharing of the story and spirit of the Missionary Sisters of Service and a commitment from Mary MacKillop Today that the program will continue to respond to the needs of marginalised communities across Australia.

While the name and structure of Highways and Byways has evolved, the mission remains the same: to empower communities and foster hope, inclusion, and resilience in the spirit of Saint Mary MacKillop and the vision of the Missionary Sisters of Service.

### **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MARY MACKILLOP TODAY HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS PROGRAM:**

- Mary MacKillop Today Highways and Byways Small Grants Program will provide small grants to community-led organisations for projects that address disadvantage and exclusion within towns and communities, especially in rural and regional Australia.

- Free2b Girls in Tasmania will continue its work building self-esteem and confidence among women and girls facing challenging circumstances.

**ABOUT MARY MACKILLOP TODAY:**

Mary MacKillop Today is an international development and community organisation working in Australia and overseas. We build partnerships that create opportunities for self-determination through education and the teaching of practical life skills to women, men and children.

Established in 2018, we continue the legacy of a 150-year-old ministry founded by Saint Mary MacKillop. We are proudly continuing the works of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, transforming lives through learning for life so that people can flourish.

We directly manage and implement programs with a range of local partners in Australia, Timor-Leste, Fiji, and Peru in the areas of education, health, financial inclusion and livelihoods. We stand with the marginalised poor in rural and remote communities, so they can break the cycle of poverty and realise their full potential.