



**RHHFFPS**

# Wallumetta

Newsletter of the Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna  
Preservation Society Inc.

Website: <http://rydehffps.org.au/>

Member of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW (NCC)  
and founding member of the Powerful Owl Coalition

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**2023**

*We acknowledge the Wallumedegal, original inhabitants of the Ryde – Hunters Hill area.*

## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

In this edition of Wallumetta we report an initiative of the Nature Conservation Council of NSW concerning the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. NCC is now a founding member of the Murray-Darling Conservation Alliance. Why is this important for the Society? The Murray-Darling Basin is a long way from Ryde and Hunters Hill and there are a lot of pressing matters closer to home.

Firstly, the Aims & Objectives of the Society include *'The promotion of ecologically sustainable land use and development at the local, state, national and international levels'*.

Secondly, the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is a mess. With less than one year out from the deadline for the ten-year plan, things are not going well. The \$13 billion plan was supposed to rein in the water extracted by farmers and communities, and make sure the environment got the water it needed. It aims to both improve the condition of freshwater ecosystems and maintain the social and economic benefits of irrigated agriculture.

The Murray-Darling Basin covers about a seventh of the Australian land mass: most of New South Wales, parts of Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, and all of the Australian Capital Territory. Around 5% of the basin consists of floodplain forests, lakes, rivers and other wetland habitats. Food grown in the basin supplies 40% of Australia's produce. If the Basin Plan fails there is a lot to lose.

Australian National University's Professor Jamie Pittock has presented five steps needed now to get the plan back on track:

1. NSW must get its act together on water plans
2. Federal water buybacks must ramp up
3. Abandon questionable water-saving projects
4. Reconnect rivers and floodplains
5. Make information transparent

More information about the five steps may be found with the following link:

<https://theconversation.com/with-less-than-a-year-to-go-the-murray-darling-basin-plan-is-in-a-dreadful-mess-these-5-steps-are-needed-to-fix-it-209328>

As the NCC says in the report, *the NSW environment movement has just entered the most critical window of opportunity we've had in decades.*

As a longstanding member of the NCC NSW, the Society firmly supports the Murray-Darling Conservation Alliance and will actively participate in initiatives to rectify the Basin Plan.

*Frank Breen, President*

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## COMING EVENTS:

### **Sunday 17 September 2023 – “Music on Mars” – watch emails for firm details; here is our plan:**

At 12.30pm a barbecue/salad lunch will be provided. Our program of choral and instrumental music will begin at 2pm. In addition to performances, there will be creative activities for children. All welcome! This project is supported by funding from City of Ryde.

*Watch emails for further details.*

### **Sunday 17 September 2023 – Bird Walk**

For early birds, our day will begin at 11am with a bird walk, led by resident expert Cathy Goswell. Prior booking for this walk is essential!

## DATES WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS:

### **Sunday 30 July 2023, 10am-12noon – NATIONAL TREE DAY**

At ELS Hall Park North Ryde, City of Ryde Council is hosting an effort to improve a wildlife corridor along Shrimptons Creek. Bring the family; all tools, gloves and training provided. Wear suitable clothes including hat and closed-in shoes. A free BBQ and refreshments will be provided.



### **Saturday 12 August, 12.30pm - SAVE OUR FORESTS RALLY**

This will be held at The Green, Addi Road Community Centre, 142 Addison Road Marrickville.

## NEWS FROM AROUND THE FIELD OF MARS

### PAST EVENTS:

**Our Field of Mars Reserve Heritage Walk, and the Winter Wildflower Walks, were all fully booked with substantial waiting lists for all three.**

On the heritage walk, we saw remnants of various activities in the Reserve before and since European settlement. Some long-standing members of our Society took the opportunity to join us for a chat and afternoon tea when the walkers returned.

Some members and friends of the Society were surprised by our observation that mid-July is the perfect time of year to see many species of colourful native flowers in our bushland, but the walkers were not disappointed. Even though the wet weather earlier in the year was not conducive to having many plants in blossom, along the Sand Track we saw many species in flower, from abundant Woollsia bushes to a few examples of dainty pink Boronias and Stylidium.

### WILDLIFE

As in autumn, there has not been much to report over the winter months. Dry weather has seen many bushes dying back and trees sacrificing limbs to keep themselves alive; however, as observed above, there have been many flowers appearing in the understorey.

### BUSHCARE

The Streamwatch water testing program has been continued by volunteer bushcarers, with mostly pleasing results. In recent weeks there has been evidence of oil pollution in Buffalo Creek near the Environmental Education Centre, but at the Monash Road footbridge the tests have not detected any oil. It is possible the pollution emanated from a neighbouring backyard.

Meanwhile, as seen in this photo, at Monash road we have taken advantage of a log from a fallen tree to create a diversion for the runoff from the Monash Road street drain. This water was washing down through the regeneration area and we hope that it will now flow into Buffalo Creek by a more appropriate route.

New members are welcome in all our teams – phone the City of Ryde on 9952 8222 to volunteer.



## VISITOR CENTRE

Over recent weeks we have been operating on the shortened winter hours, closing at 4pm, but are set to stay open until 5pm again soon. Visitor numbers have been variable, ranging from 0 to 20+ visitors per day calling in to the centre for information. On some days over 100 passers-by have been seen in the Reserve during our opening hours. Numbers do not appear to have been affected by weather or alternative events.

On the evening of Thursday 29 July, East Ryde Joey Scouts paid the centre a return visit. They did some more cleaning and left their new artworks which are now displayed on the wall.



Recently, thanks to a grant from the Australian Government, we acquired an automated external defibrillator (AED) for the Visitor Centre – a welcome addition to our first aid equipment and something which is good to have but we hope we never need. As **with all AEDs, special training is NOT required** in order to use it; however, we do recommend that everyone completes a first aid training course.

**JOIN OUR VISITOR CENTRE TEAM!** to keep the Visitor Centre open 9am-5pm on weekends and public holidays. Our roster of 4-hour shifts is negotiated according to members' availability. No specialised skills are required, and Alfred happily provides the training needed.

Most visitors' questions are answered in the maps and range of free leaflets we have available.

## DOGS AND THEIR EFFECTS ON BIRDS

Research exploring the effect of dogs on native birds is minimal when compared to that on cats, but a [2007 study in the urban fringe of Sydney](#) found that dog walking in woodland leads to a 35% reduction in bird diversity and a 41% reduction in abundance.

In 2018, BirdLife Australia published a [report](#) on adverse impacts of dogs on beach nesting birds. It highlighted major issues of disturbance, egg predation, egg crushing, and chick predation.

The Field of Mars Reserve is a Wildlife Protection Area Category 1, so dogs are not allowed into the Reserve at all, not even when on a leash. Nevertheless, our volunteers continue to report seeing many dog owners bringing their dogs in, with the typical excuse being that they did not notice any notices banning dogs. When the Visitor Centre is open we log our sightings, but we have no doubt that there are many more dogs being brought in to the upper areas of the Reserve, as evidenced by dog droppings and sightings by walkers and bushcarers.

## BIRDLIFE SNSW AT THE RYDE SUSTAINABILITY FESTIVAL

BirdLife Southern NSW visited the City of Ryde in Sydney on Sunday, 4 June. The Ryde Sustainability Festival celebrated World Environment Day, which occurs on 5 June each year. This year's theme focussed on solutions to plastic pollution under the campaign #BeatPlasticPollution.

In conjunction with Cumberland Bird Observers Club (CBOC), BLSNSW hosted an information stand promoting the conservation of Australia's native birds, the diverse effects of plastic pollution on birds, the joy of birdwatching and highlighting current campaigns to protect Swift Parrots, control 2nd generation rodenticides, and strengthen Federal nature laws.



*Report and Photo by Cathy Goswell*

Lots of great conversations took place with children and adults alike. So many selfies with our Powerful Owl were taken. It's amazing how many questions people want to ask, so it is great to have our volunteers there to talk BIRDS!!!

## PITTWATER NATURAL HERITAGE ASSOCIATION (PNHA) AND TRAD SMUT

*Report by Marita Macrae, published in Landlink June 2023 (Landcare Australia)*

*Tradescantia fluminensis* formerly called Wandering Jew, now simply WanderingTrad, is a dreaded weed mostly of coastal or cool damp areas. It grows densely, smothering natives such as ground covers and seedling trees and shrubs.

In late 2020 PNHA received some Trad stems from the CSIRO. These were infected with a Smut, a type of fungus *Kordyana brasiliensis* found infecting the Trad in its native Brazil. Extensive testing had proved this did not infect closely related native species, such as *Commelina cyanea* and others. We planted the stems among healthy Trad in several bushland reserves and were prepared to wait up to a year for the Smut to spread.

The spread was quicker than expected and happened in most of the places where infected stems were planted. The effect is to cause the leaves to develop yellowish areas on the upper surface, and discs of fungus spore areas on the undersurface. The foliage withers and thins, freeing native ground cover species from competition from light and moisture. The Trad doesn't die completely, but it removes the need for handweeding or spraying.

Recently the *Commelina cyanea* in the Pittwater area looked as though Smut had infected it too, but the CSIRO reported that this was caused by another leaf fungus, of which there are many.

**Editor's Note:** As an experiment, Smut was introduced to Trad in the upper Strangers Creek area of the Field of Mars Reserve during 2022, and it appears to have already spread down and along Buffalo Creek. As reported above, it does not entirely kill the Trad but certainly checks its growth. This gives native species a better chance of growing and surviving in the riparian areas.

## SYNTHETIC TURF FIELDS 'LACK STANDARDS'; CHIEF SCIENTIST RECOMMENDS MORE RESEARCH

The Executive Summary (page v) of the Chief Scientist's final report includes two stand-out quotes:

- "Overall, it is not clear whether expectations about the longevity and carrying capacity of synthetic fields can be met under Australian climatic conditions, potentially influencing decisions about installation and cost-benefit considerations" and
- "Best practice guidelines for improving the performance of natural turf have been developed in NSW. If applied to installation and ongoing management of natural turf sporting fields, these practices may allow increased performance of natural turf fields to meet demand"



## **End Of Life And Recycling:**

The shipping overseas option was available only until 30 June 2021. One local council tried to export unprocessed mixed polymer in 2022 but no Federal export permit was granted. It would have breached Australia's obligations under Basle Convention Against Transglobal Shipping of Hazardous Waste. According to one report, the 400 rolls (600m<sup>3</sup>) still sit in a pile by the local road.

Shipping companies will not take onboard any complex contaminated mixed polymers messed up with residual crumb rubber dust. Officials in receiving ports refuse to accept such shipments. Onshore processing was essential pre-shipping, but no such facility exists in Australia.

## **The Science of Artificial Turf Presentation**

See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgiywwXsdPU>

This is a review of the most recent science on artificial turf and the rapidly growing consensus that artificial turf fields are a toxic danger to the environment, by Dr Kyla Bennett, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), Massachusetts Progressive Forum, 15 April 2023.

**Synthetic Turf Recycling** proponents are sellers of new synthetic turf to local councils, with four hectares of vacant rural land earmarked at Barnawartha. No facility exists there yet. They received a Victorian Government grant, but the investment is inadequate for best practice.

Plastic grass is dirty when dug up. Successful "circular economy" recycling require it to be clean. Washing it will generate large quantities of highly microplastic contaminated water or solvent.

**West Pennant Hills Valley Progress Association** has had a win for the moment with natural turf being selected for 3 playing fields being redeveloped in our valley. However, this may not be a long term win, as there are plans to roll out more plastic grass in the Hills Shire.

**The Natural Turf Alliance** continues its campaign for the Norman Griffiths Field at West Pymble. They flagged serious gaps in terms of the Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and, although Ku-ring-gai Council received letters from the Alliance, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Sue Higginson MLC and other community leaders, it's taken an exceedingly costly court action to ensure that the REF is reviewed. On Tuesday 4th July the Land and Environment Court was asked that proper assessments - required under Environmental Legislation - are completed. The field is surrounded by a critically endangered Sydney Turpentine Ironbark Forest and all it supports - microbats, powerful owls, galahs etc. as well as the Quarry Creek bushcare site downstream.

## **FERAL FREE SANCTUARY WILL BENEFIT CUMBERLAND PLAIN**

Ian Bailey, Committee member, Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) Guardian of Richmond Woodlands and member of Birdlife Australia reported that the new feral-free sanctuary, Yiraaldiya National Park is an important development in the plan to conserve native species.

Around 25 ha of the 500 ha site has been enclosed, and koalas have been released. The next native animal to be re-introduced will be the Eastern Bettong.

While the emphasis is on mammals, the obvious safety net for birds applies. Ground nesting birds, which have always been vulnerable in the city, are the species most likely to benefit. Cats can reach almost any nest, and ground-feeding and nesting birds are an easy target. In addition, several threatened bird species, including speckled warbler, scarlet robin and rose robin, use the site and will benefit from the project. The fence will be electrified so vandals will be discouraged.

National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) are managing this park. Yiraaldiya National Park is not part of the Richmond Woodlands KBA, but NSW NPWS have given the KBA surveyors the green light to continue with their work.

## **NEWS AND ACTIONS BY THE NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL OF NSW (NCC):**

**The NSW environment movement has just entered the most critical window of opportunity we've had in decades.** After 12 years of deliberate destruction, we finally have a government that says they recognise the value of our environment, and a crossbench calling for further action.

As the state's leading environmental advocacy organisation, it's our role to ensure this historic moment isn't wasted. We are already briefing new Ministers and MPs, and working to bring together the NSW environmental movement to exert maximum pressure on decision-makers.

**There is no time to waste. Over a thousand plants and animals in NSW are currently at risk of extinction. The Murray Darling Basin is teetering on the verge of collapse. Our taxpayer dollars continue to be spent on pulping our native forests for woodchips and cardboard.**

Addressing these issues requires the collective effort of people who understand the urgency and value of preserving our environment for generations to come. Below are details of the plan to do just that. We are invited to join in this pivotal moment to protect and restore our natural wonders.

### **Worth More Standing: End native forest logging**

With Victoria and Western Australia committed to ending native forest logging by 2023, this is our moment to end the destruction across NSW.

- Step 1: Save the Great Koala National Park: Protect 175,000 hectares of forest encompassing one fifth of NSW's koalas, while further reducing Forestry Corporation's economic viability.
- Step 2: Keep logging on the agenda: Expose illegal activities and the devastating impact of logging to make native forest logging a focal point of criticism for the new government.
- Step 3: Win the economic argument: Remove Forestry Corporation's social license by publicising the extent of taxpayer money being spent to pulp native forests for woodchips.

### **Beyond Coal: End the mining and burning of coal in NSW by 2030**

NSW has a pathway to end the burning of coal by 2030. The government's own modelling shows this transition would be cheaper, more sustainable, and contribute to a healthier environment. But fossil fuel companies and conservative commentators are spearheading a multi-million dollar fear campaign to protect their record profits.

NCC is running strategic campaigns to counter misinformation, support renewable energy projects and oppose the expansion and extension of coal fired powerplants and mines.

### **Revive Our Rivers: Australia's Biggest Ecological Restoration Plan**

Covering 70% of NSW and home to 2 million people, the Murray Darling Basin is on the verge of collapse. NCC is now a founding member of the Murray-Darling Conservation Alliance, a paradigm shift in the campaign to save our inland rivers. By bringing the leading conservation organisations from across Australia together, a simple transformative plan is developed for the Murray Darling:

Step 1: Get the Basin Plan back on track, while leveraging our individual influence to secure strategic commitments from each state government.

Step 2: Secure funding for climate adaptation and resilience programs.

## CAMPAIGN TO END RELEASE OF OIL & GAS ACREAGE IN OUR OCEANS

The mindless annual acreage release by the federal government underpins the ongoing expansion of the offshore fossil fuel industry in this country. These areas are chosen at the whim of the petroleum industry, **without serious environmental assessment** and **without any real consideration of the views of the communities most directly impacted** by these decisions.

It is completely inconsistent with the International Energy Agency's roadmap to net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, and represents Australia's failure to protect its extraordinary marine life.

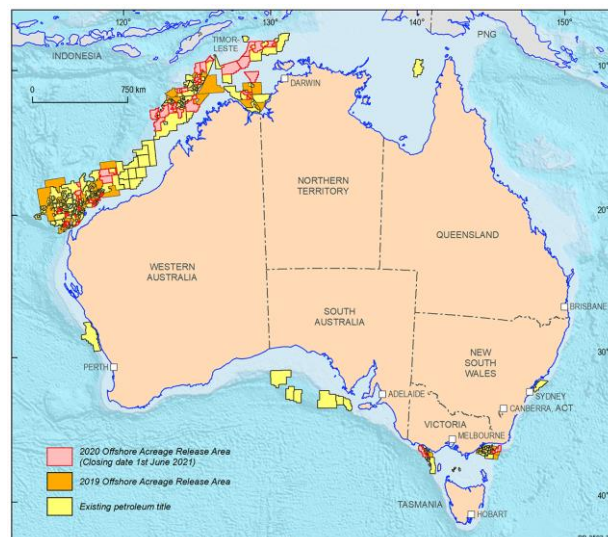
**This exploration release cycle gives away the oceans to private fossil fuel interests, making it virtually impossible to ever protect them properly in the future.**

But now, recent reports coming out of the industry suggest this release process may have stalled. Oil and gas companies are no doubt lobbying to get this insanity up and running again.

Australians know that it is high time for the mindless release to end, especially in the midst of climate and biodiversity crises. So it is important that the government hears from us all now.

THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY is asking us to email Ministers King and Bowen to show them support so that the Albanese government can end offshore acreage releases for good. There is a pro-forma email which is easy to send – see

<https://wilderness.good.do/mindlessrelease2023/kingbowen2023/>



*Map by Geoscience Australia*

## BIBES DON'T WORK: HOW TO GET PEOPLE TO VALUE REUSABLE COFFEE CUPS

People are searching for the solution to cafe waste so they can enjoy their favourite beverage guilt-free, but one researcher finds we shouldn't try to bribe drinkers to try reusable coffee cups.

"This is not just a storm in a coffee cup," says University of South Australia Associate Professor Sukhbir Sandhu, speaking on World Environment Day at the first *Cosmos Science City* free lunchtime science forum. **"300 billion of them end up in landfill every year."**

To try to convince people to give up plastic cups in favour of reusable cups Sandhu's team did some [research](#) and asked people how much of a discount cafés should provide to encourage people to bring their own cups.

The answers were surprising. "We interviewed consumers, café owners and policy makers in South Australia, and observed customer behaviour in cafes for around 50 hours", Sandhu says.

One finding became very clear: **people mimic each other.**

"Customers we interviewed told us over and over that watching their colleagues bring in their reusable coffee cups (such as a KeepCup) made them change their habits."

## FEDERAL GOVERNMENT - NO PROGRESS ON PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

We hoped that our new governments would heed the clear desire by Australians as expressed in recent elections, but Minister for the Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek has:

- Still no legislation to strengthen the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 and this won't happen until next year according to her in the Webinar hosted by the NCC on 26 June. This means there is still nothing to protect native forests from logging, no effective water trigger to protect our precious water, no climate trigger to stop more fossil fuel projects and no strong protection of vital habitats for endangered flora and fauna.
- Approved logging of endangered bird habitat for a defence housing development in Darwin despite acknowledging there is a significant risk for what has been described as one of Australia's most beautiful endangered birds, the Gouldian Finch.
- Introduced legislation that will change Australia's sea dumping laws to allow carbon dioxide to be directly pumped into international waters relying on the flawed belief that carbon capture and storage works. This means that other countries can dump their carbon waste here.
- Approved Ensham thermal coal mine expansion in Central Queensland so they can mine until 2037. She has also made approval decisions on three new coal mining projects, all in Central Queensland: the Isaac River Coal mine, the Star coal mine bulk sampling project to proceed without assessment as a 'controlled action'. Minister Plibersek is not taking into account the climate impacts of new coal approvals.

Meanwhile, the Australian Government is shutting down a promised inquiry about the Darwin Harbour Middle Arm development: see

<http://climatechangers.org/lists/lt.php?tid=nrNsmLYumRmZ1P4vtTmpZXL3Ntoe4mK+hUSimd1GP69wWso8gv0v5a/Lmpy5AZGr>

## NSW GOVERNMENT – NOT YET ACTING TO PRESERVE NATURAL VALUES

Since being elected last March, the NSW Government's un-natural decisions included:

- Fast-tracking housing developments in vital koala habitats at Appin and Mt Gilead
- Earmarking 40,000 hectares for logging in prime koala habitat, even though the Perrottet government found native logging could end without costing the budget
- Allowing Logging to continue in the proposed Great Koala National Park.

Meanwhile, an audit report on NSW Forestry Corporation found it does not consistently monitor compliance of contractors.

*Photo – NPA NSW: "Forestry Corporation's decision to log old growth, rainforest and koala feed trees in Great Koala National Park logging cope is appalling."*





## DUMPED: THE NUCLEAR WASTE FACILITY AT KIMBA DECISION THROWN OUT BY JUDGE

*Précis of article by Ellen Phiddian, published by Cosmos 18 July 2023*

The Federal Court ruled in favour of the Barngarla Determination Aboriginal Corporation in a dispute around the proposed [nuclear waste dump at Kimba](#), on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula.

The court overturned former federal resource minister Keith Pitt's decision to build the facility, saying it was affected by "bias".

The National Radioactive Waste Management Facility (NRWMF) proposal was to store low-level radioactive waste permanently, and intermediate-level waste temporarily.

Both sources of waste are generated in Australia, and currently stored in hundreds of locations around the country: low-level waste is usually laboratory items like gloves, paper, and plastic, while intermediate-level waste often comes from making nuclear medicines.

The Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights in Sydney is a major source of this intermediate waste, which is being stored on site.

The Morrison government decided to build the storage facility at Kimba in November 2021, but the Traditional Owners, the Barngarla people, did not provide consent, and said they were excluded from a "community ballot" which had found locals tentatively in favour.

Current federal resources minister Madeleine King said in a statement that "Labor worked with the Barngarla People in the last term of Parliament to ensure they secured the right to seek judicial review of the decision to acquire the site."

"The problem with what's happened here at Kimba, is that it has happened before," said Associate Professor Nigel Marks, a physicist at Curtin University. "It's crazy that we can't find a way to do it, because it's not dangerous in any health sense."

With appropriate shielding, low and intermediate level waste doesn't yield any extra radiation risk. According to the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#), long-term waste storage facilities need to be in geologically stable areas, with low population density and low flood risk.

Professor Ian Lowe, emeritus professor of science, technology and society at Griffith University, pointed out, "Storage of nuclear waste is always going to be a problem while governments adopt the 'decide and defend' approach... Attempts to impose a storage site have repeatedly failed in the UK and the US, because local communities have understandably mobilised to object to the imposition on them of what is seen as dangerous material."

"The only countries which have made real progress are Finland and Sweden, who involved local communities in choosing sites and working out the way to store the waste." Swedish towns bid for a nuclear waste storage facility and Forsmark, about 130 kilometres from Stockholm, was chosen.

"We have a special problem in Australia," says Lowe. "The local Indigenous people were never consulted when the Menzies government allowed testing of British nuclear weapons in South Australia and Western Australia. "Indigenous people suffered from the radiation released by those bomb tests, so they are hostile to proposals for imposing radiation risks on them."

"Since any site chosen by one of our governments will be on the land of the relevant Traditional Owners, an objection is almost certain. Unless local people are genuinely involved in the process of determining where waste will be stored, the problem will not be solved."



*Photo by The Canberra Times*

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Alternatively, you may pay by cash or cheque: Complete and hand in this form with payment in a sealed envelope at the Field of Mars Visitor Centre or post to: RHHFFPS, PO Box 552, Gladesville 1675.

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Proceeds support the work of our Society.



The winning ticket will be drawn at our Society's next Annual General Meeting.

\* Hand knitted and kindly donated by members of the Holy Spirit Yarnknit Group.