

# Regenerative projects show how Catholic Religious are applying *Laudato Si'*



Here are just a few of the many examples of regeneration initiated by Catholic Religious, either on their own land or in partnership with local community groups around Australia.

These inspirational projects demonstrate what an authentic commitment to *Laudato Si'* might look like on the ground, literally at the grassroots, with goals to not only increase biodiversity but to sequester carbon through soils and mitigate other climate change impacts such as bushfire and drought.

## Wivenhoe, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, Camden NSW

In 2012, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan entered into a contract with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH), setting aside a piece of land (about 30 hectares) near Camden NSW, on the banks of the Nepean River, for ecological restoration work. Since then, a further 60 hectares of Cumberland Plain Woodland has been included. Tree planting activities and educational tours engage members of the local community in this important work.

This project is administered as a 'Biobanking' agreement. The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (administered by the OEH) provides funds for the gradual restoration of the land.

## Winbourne Edmund Rice Centre, the Christian Brothers, Mulgoa NSW

Another biobank site, *Winbourne*, has been set aside for regeneration since 2018. Under this scheme, a biobank site is set aside in perpetuity, but the landowner retains the ownership.

The forested escarpment that makes up the western portion (about 20 hectares) of the *Winbourne* property was the first area designated for regeneration, followed by a much more extensive area taking into account watercourses between the Warragamba pipeline and the Nepean River. A detailed botanical survey showed the dominant ecological zones present to be endangered Cumberland Plain Woodland and Sandstone-Shale Transition Forest, with smaller areas of other vegetation types. It is estimated that weed and erosion control and revegetation at *Winbourne* will take about 20 years to complete.

Alongside NAIDOC week's theme "Heal Country!", the preparations for COP 15, Convention on Biological Diversity, to be held in October this year, the launch of the Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* Action Platform goals, and the recent stand taken by Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) on the federal [Environmental Protection and Conservation Act](#), it is timely to reflect on the many hands-on regenerative projects already initiated by Catholic Religious to heal and protect landscapes.

Each year, agreed outcomes—such as the removal of feral animals and weeds and regeneration of native species—must be achieved in order for funds to be released for further work.

This project is just one part of the commitment to creation taken by the Good Samaritan Sisters. Other examples include their efforts to understand the science, theology and economy of the cosmos, efforts which influence everything from their approach to prayer and relationships, to care of the environment and stewardship of material resources, including investments. [Read more here](#)

Establishment of the *Winbourne* biobank site is a concrete expression of the commitment of the Christian Brothers Oceania Province to caring for our common home. It means that this part of the property will in due course become healthy habitat for a wide range of species and so make a contribution to the integrity of the planet. [Read more here](#)



*Map of Winbourne showing the biobank site as originally proposed, in yellow. The site now includes the area outlined in red.*

### St Clements Retreat and Conference Centre, the Redemptorists, Galong NSW

Set in more than 300 hectares of rural agricultural land, St Clement Centre's peaceful location is the home of many retreats, conferences and workshops. Since the 1920s the Redemptorist priests, brothers and students who lived there have contributed to the farm's viability and sustainability.

An upcoming eco-spiritual retreat "[Healing our World: Regenerative Relationships – Dialogue and Action](#)" (5-8 October 2021) will introduce participants to the regenerative agriculture made accessible by one of Australia's leaders in this movement, Charles Massy, author of the bestselling [Call of the Reed Warbler](#).

### Mercy Creek, Seville Mercy Conference Centre, Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia and Papua New Guinea, Cairns QLD

Last year, Seville Mercy Conference Centre, Cairns, made a decision to adopt *Laudato Si'* into their operations. This included staff training in *Laudato Si'* and sustainability, developing a strategic plan and a benchmark of practices in January 2021, resulting in 76 changes to the way in which they undertake their ministry. In addition to this, Seville also conduct workshops and retreats based on *Laudato Si'* for their local community and many visitors from around Australia.

A jewel in the crown of their efforts is the restoration of "Mercy Creek", a degraded section of rainforest on the outskirts of the city, running alongside a creek on one side of the property. (See photos below.) While the regeneration efforts have slowly improved diversity of the creek system and rainforest habitat for the past 14 years, Seville groundskeepers, inspired by *Laudato Si'*, are working towards chemical-free, design-based solutions to the challenges of invasive weeds in the rainforest. [Read more here](#)

# Mercy Creek



## Highways and Byways, Missionary Sisters of Service

### [43 community projects around Australia “Healing the land – Healing ourselves – Together”](#)

Of an astounding 43 regional and rural Australian regenerative projects supported through small grants, *Highways and Byways* recently launched their second partnership programme in North East Tasmania. “Restoring Nature and Communities” is a partnership with North East Bioregional Network, who have a long history of successful eco-restoration projects in this region. This is a 20-week programme of ecological restoration and best practice land management in the Break O’Day municipality. To complete the project, Todd Dudley, President of North East Bioregional Network, is managing and training four local community members who have been unemployed.

Another of the 43 projects is “Healing Country: Wanyurr-Majay Aboriginal Corporation Babinda, QLD”. Wanyurr-Majay Aboriginal Corporation and Mulgrave Landcare and Catchment Group will restore vegetation on a privately owned property in Traditional Wanyurr-Majay Country. Native endemic trees will be planted along a degraded watercourse to strengthen species diversity, wildlife corridors and improve water quality.

The initiative brings elders and land custodians together to share ecological knowledge and build capacity. It will also provide Wanyurr-Majay Aboriginal Corporation with the opportunity to work on country. Such opportunities are few, given that much of the Traditional Estate is now private tenure.

[Read more here](#)

## Bees, Butterflies and Bugs for Balconies, Back Verandas and Window Sills. Earthkin, Sisters of Mercy Parramatta NSW

The Sisters of Mercy Parramatta “Earthkin Group” are encouraging care and assistance for pollinators. They promote actions to assist those insects that help maintain the beauty and food production that we depend upon for relaxation and nourishment.

Titled “Bees, Butterflies and Bugs for Balconies, Back Verandas and Window Sills”, this activity involves growing pollinator-friendly plants in pots or other containers. (See photos below.) For further information visit [Latest News—Sisters of Mercy Parramatta \(parramattamercy.org.au\)](#) This initiative links with another project, [the B & B Highway \(Bed, Breakfast and Biodiversity of birds, Bees and Butterflies\)](#), founded by Dr Judy Frielander and promoted by Nicole Lewis and Francisco Garcia Bulle Bueno.

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These are just some of the many hopeful regeneration initiatives instigated by Catholic Religious across Australia.

Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* Action Platform launch this year will no doubt see many more projects under way, in both privately owned land and partnerships for community spaces, as part of the journey towards regeneration over the next seven years.



## Earthkin | Sisters of Mercy Parramatta



Bees, Butterflies and Bugs for  
Balconies, Back Verandas and  
Window Sills