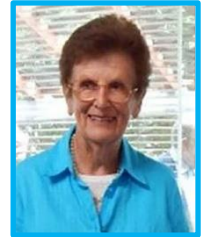




## COUSINS BOTH RECEIVE AUSTRALIA DAY HONOUR

Two former Cororooke women received the Order of Australia medals for their service to communities across the country. Cousins Claire Larkin and Sr Mary O'Shannassy sgs received the honours on Australia Day.

Mrs Larkin's medal recognises her dedication to the Mary MacKillop Interpretive Centre at Penola, South Australia. The passionate volunteer moved to Penola from Cororooke with her sister Anne, where she remains with her husband Brian. (Mrs Larkin is pictured right.)



Sr O'Shannassy (pictured below) went to primary and secondary school at St Brendan's and lived in Ryans Lane, Cororooke, before moving to Sydney to become a Sister of the Good Samaritan.



She now works as a chaplain in the Victorian criminal justice system, and has worked in parishes across the country since leaving Colac. "That takes me to the maximum security prisons, right through to the medium and minimum security prisons where they are getting ready to re-enter society," she said. Sr O'Shannassy said she enjoyed helping prisoners establish self worth. "Many have never been given respect," she said. "We work to get them to find something good within themselves and see something good within them, but they find that very challenging."

Sr O'Shannassy said chaplaincy was a very rewarding experience that aimed to "create less victims in society. It's very rewarding and fulfilling, to see the amount of growth in many of these people from the moment they enter the system to when they leave is a privilege," she said.

Sr O'Shannassy said she was surprised to receive an Order of Australia medal and dedicated the award to her family and friends in Colac and "all the people who have enriched my life over my journey. It was a privilege to receive such an honour, but the medal is not just for me, it honours the people I work with and the men and women in prison who I work with."

*Article courtesy of the Colac Herald, journalist Ruby Manson.*

### ***Sue McGuinness rsj writes the following on Claire Larkin's award:***

The prominent headlines on the front page of South Australia's Border Watch described the recipients of the 2017 Australia Day Awards as "Pillars of our Community." Mrs Claire Larkin is one such "pillar".

She has been worthily recognised with the Medal of the Order of Australia for her "service to the community of Penola." This service embraces a wide-ranging list of activities and involvements over the years, including a host of clubs and organisations - wherever the interests of her husband and children were. It is heart-warming to be able to publicly acknowledge the committed, generous service Claire has given to our community, but we are especially grateful for her dedicated work at the Mary MacKillop Interpretive Centre.

The joyful news of Claire's Award was received with delight and gratitude by the Penola people, especially members of the Catholic parish community, and all Sisters of St Joseph. Since her retirement from her work at the Penola War Memorial Hospital in 1995, where she held the responsible position of Chief Executive

Officer, Claire has given herself tirelessly to the promotion of Saint Mary MacKillop through her leadership at the Centre as Chairperson and Co-ordinator. While she is the first to acknowledge that the strong band of volunteer workers enables the Centre to function successfully, no one would deny the significance of Claire's vision and insightful leadership.



Claire's devotion to, and love for, Saint Mary MacKillop is reflected in the spirit in which she carries out her works of service. In mostly "hidden" ways, Claire ensures that the Centre is a welcoming place and that the environment is inviting. She leads very much by example and she treats everyone equally. She listens with interest and attention, no matter how trivial or how important the issue. She attends to routine tasks and takes her turn on the volunteers' roster, but she is equally at home accepting a high public profile at times and communicating with politicians, local councillors and members of the Churches. This was perhaps best illustrated during the times of both the Beatification and Canonisation of St Mary MacKillop where she was willing and able to respond to media requests with wisdom, dignity and deep conviction.



At Penola Claire enjoys the respect of members of the local business community and especially the tourist Industry. She has availed herself of every opportunity to maximise the profile of the Mary MacKillop Centre in the wider community to the extent that in 2016 the Mary MacKillop Centre, Penola was listed as one of the 100 things in South Australia one must do before you die!

In acknowledging her Award at the Penola Australia Day celebrations, Claire expressed her belief that St Mary MacKillop has brought many blessings to Penola and its people. She recalled the fact that she has met many wonderfully inspiring people through her involvement at the Centre. In her own inimitable way, she said simply and humbly, "It is an honour to be recognised. However, I wish I could share it with all of the great people I have worked with over the years."

The Sisters of St Joseph and the Catholic parish community of Penola salute you, Claire, and thank you for all you have done to keep the vision and the story of Mary MacKillop and Julian Tenison Woods alive.

*Congratulations!*  
*Sue McGuinness rsj*

*Photos:*

*Top: Claire Larkin (in blue) with sculptor Judith Rolevink  
Claire Larkin (left) with long time friend, Lenore McKie, celebrating the Feast Day of St Mary MacKillop,  
August, 2016.  
[www.sosj.org.au](http://www.sosj.org.au)*

***CatholicCare Melbourne writes the following:***

### ***Sr Mary O'Shannassy earns OAM on Australia Day***

We couldn't be prouder of Sr Mary O'Shannassy sgs, who received a Medal of the Order of Australia (in the General Division) on Australia Day for her 'service to the community through church and social welfare bodies'. Sr Mary has provided pastoral care to people in Victoria's prisons since 1994. At the heart of her work is a deep respect for the unique worth of every person, and it is apparent every time she speaks about men and women in prison, who she respectfully chooses to refer to as 'residents'.

When asked to describe her role, she speaks humbly of meeting and listening to inmates to provide for their spiritual and emotional needs, and bringing hope to their lives. In the eyes of prisoners, incarceration can mean more than the loss of their freedom; it can mean the loss of family, love, dignity and hope. So at a time



when many prisoners feel abandoned by society, chaplains like Sr Mary provide a real sense that someone still cares.

Her role as a prison chaplain extends to providing ongoing support and encouragement to ex-prisoners, as many find themselves isolated after being discharged. It encompasses support for the families and friends of those in prison: partners, siblings, parents, children or "the significant people in their lives"; providing emotional support and referrals to community support systems.

She describes the symbol of ministry as a rock: dirty, sharp, and black on the outside – but with a precious stone hidden inside, and continues to dedicate her work to finding the beauty within those for whom society have given up for lost, enabling men and women to find the beauty within themselves and encouraging their sense of self-worth.

And for anyone curious about what it takes to be awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia, as well as Director of Prison Ministry for CatholicCare, Sr Mary is currently also:

- Director of Catholic Prison Ministry Victoria, where she leads a team of 20 chaplains and over 50 volunteers who work across the entire Victorian prison system
- Member of the Multi-Faith Leaders Group, where she helps negotiate with government on contractual and governance matters, and continues to promote the sustainability and service development of the prison chaplaincy service
- Convenor of the Chaplains' Advisory Committee, where she works with Corrections Victoria and other faith communities to champion programs that break the chains of poverty and disadvantage for prisoners across all faiths.

Sr Mary has said, "We endeavour to affirm the inherent human dignity of each person - a person with physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual needs. We aim to enable those in custody to recognise their own dignity and worth, to accept their story without fear and to find some hope in their life---all of which assists their rehabilitation."

Sr Mary models courage, tenacity, tireless commitment, collaboration and empathy; leading by example to inspire and motivate others - and we couldn't think of a more fitting recognition of her earning an OAM on Australia Day.

*Photo of Sister Mary by Fiona Basile*

*Article courtesy of [melbournecatholic.org.au](http://melbournecatholic.org.au)*