

WELLSPRINGS FOR WOMEN

JUNE 2017



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FOREWORD FROM THE CHAIR

Since January Wellsprings for Women has experienced a remarkable transformation. We bid farewell to staff members Veronica Hassett and Heather Wearne and Volunteers Judy Bellesini, Vona Beiers, Donna Bowker, Margaret U'ren, Niluka Von Hagt and Vicki Collier. I take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Veronica for her years of dedication to Wellsprings.

We also farewelled Ruth McGowan and Fiona Killackey from the Board of Management. We would like to thank Donna Ward and Louise Klein who worked closely with us through our time of transition. We welcome our new, and first CEO, Dr Dalal Smiley, who with over thirty-five year's experience working with multicultural women, implementing strategic plans, and in customer service delivery, has hit the tarmac running and is shining the light of hope on our way forward. Dalal has been working closely with Bod and Sonu to consolidate our financial and administrative systems, and has already secured an additional \$50,000 grant from ACFE.

We welcome back to Wellsprings, Monira Tahery to assist with enrolments and the administrative team and Holly Gordon as the Education Coordinator. We celebrate Minh Nguyen who has joined the Board of Management. Minh brings extensive knowledge and experience in evidenced-based research and program evaluation from her work with Non-Government Peak Bodies.

Dalal and The Board are pursuing adequate funding to implement our strategic plan and are actively considering the appointment of a suitable accounting firm to oversee our finances and ensure due diligence on an ongoing basis.

I, again, thank the staff, and the volunteers, longstanding and new, for their outstanding and gracious work for Wellsprings these past six months which enabled us to stay focused on those who use our services throughout this demanding time.

Finally, I thank the Presentation Sisters for their generous special grant which has made this period of change easier.

I personally hope you will come along to our General Meeting on Thursday, 21st September 2pm and bring your friends to our Wellsprings Annual Dinner on Friday, 17th November 2017.



Janet Cribbes
Chairperson





WHAT THE FIRST CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF WELLSPRINGS HAS TO SAY.....



AS WE CONTINUE THE WELLSPRINGS TRADITION



The twenty third of March 2017 marks a new beginning for me personally as I started in the role of CEO at Wellsprings. It is indeed a real privilege to be working in such an amazing organisation with a profound legacy in working on justice, equality and compassion for women in our community.

What attracted me to Wellsprings was its clear mission of working with the most disadvantaged women in our society to build their capabilities to shape their lives in accordance with their talents and aspirations.

That mission resonates with me, for I migrated to Australia in 1976 with my mother and younger brother, escaping the Lebanese civil war. It was my education that provided me the tools to engage fully in the Australian society and participate in the social, political, cultural and recreational opportunities available to all of us.

It was also the good will, hospitality and generosity of the many people who became family, friends, colleagues, supporters and mentors that played a significant role in cementing my sense of belonging.

Education and belonging are the two elements that underpin Wellsprings' approach to working with women whether born here, newly arrived, from migrant, refugee or asylum seekers' background, to support them as they overcome the numerous challenges and barriers in their lives.

Wellsprings is enriched by the experiences of the women who make its community, from the Board members to the staff, volunteers and participants in the programs on offer, it is a colony of women caring, sharing, healing, growing, listening, advocating, deliberating, leading and influencing change to make our world a more compassionate, safe, just and welcoming place.

As I move forward in my role, cognisant of the responsibilities and opportunities ahead, I like to acknowledge the legacy of the women who came before me and laid the foundation to what is today a highly cherished and valued organisation in the broader Dandenong community and beyond. I thank the Wellsprings Board for entrusting me in the role of CEO and to facilitate the implementation of the vision and strategic goals they developed together with Wellsprings staff.

I'd like to thank the staff and volunteers of Wellsprings for Women who have embraced my presence and welcomed me into their inner sanctum, the participants in our programs who are always open and ready to challenge themselves, share their stories and wisdom and enrich us all, and finally my colleagues in the Catholic and community services sector in Dandenong, Casey and Cardinia who extended their help and support as I settle into my role.

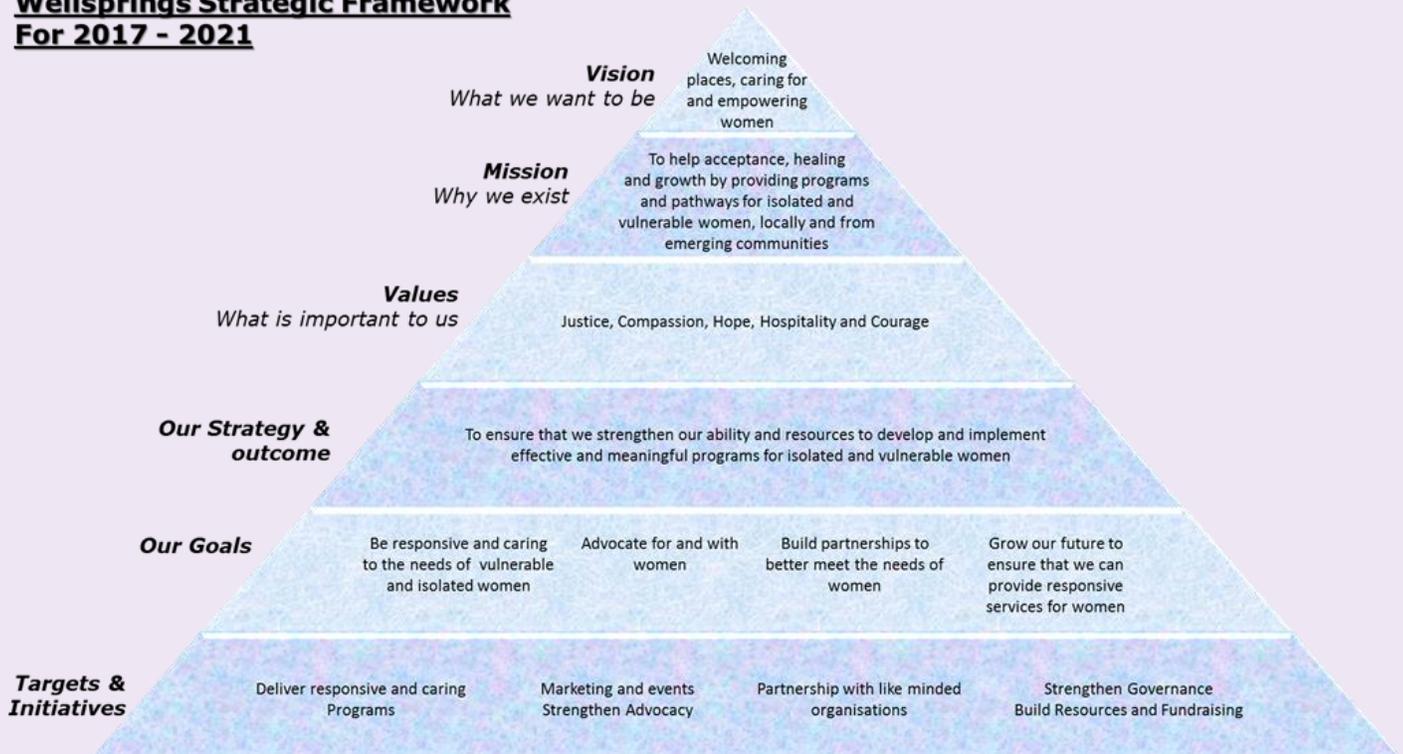
A special thanks to our Funding Bodies, Cities of Dandenong & Casey, Presentation Sisters Victoria, DHHS, ACFE, Margaret Lawrence, RE Ross, Scanlon Foundation, Tobin Brothers Foundation, Rotary Club Dandenong East, Bank of Melbourne and the numerous individual donors including St Johns Regional College, Zonta, Sigma, Spotlight, Josephine Shoes and Avocare.

I am very optimistic about the future of Wellsprings and the numerous possibilities ahead of us just waiting to be explored.

Dalal Smiley
Chief Executive Officer



Wellsprings Strategic Framework For 2017 - 2021



ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE (EAL)

I have been volunteering at Wellsprings for two years in the Thursday morning and afternoon sewing classes. In March I started teaching the Level 1 & 2 EAL, I have enjoyed teaching such an enthusiastic diverse group of women. Their hard work has been rewarded with improvement in both their grammar and speaking skills. It's great to see these women working cooperatively together communicating in English. Thank you to the great team of volunteers who have helped me make this possible.

LEARNING TO LIVE IN AUSTRALIA (LLA)



I also started teaching this class in March. We have covered a wide range of topics including summer safety, Australian geography, Melbourne's 3 zoos, Multiculturalism, when and how to contact trades people, when to call the ambulance, and the significance of Anzac day. We have made Anzac biscuits, lamingtons and jelly cakes. A guest speaker from the Dandenong library informed us of all the services they provide and read stories to the children. Thank you to the great team of volunteers who help me in this class, some attending to the children and others working with the participants.

Bank of Melbourne Cranbourne Branch Manager, Maryanne Hutchinson, presenting cheque to Board Chair Janet Cribbes to support the Learning to Live in Australia program

Mandy Seehusen
Teacher



CRAFT GROUP



Both the Monday and Tuesday groups are well attended with participants busy knitting / crocheting **Tea Pot Cosies for Craft-a-Cure** for cancer research. So far 12 have been created. They will be posted at the end of term 2. Other donations will be accepted.

The Knitting Group has started creating items for **KoGo** (knit one give one) for the homeless and blankets for **Backpaks** for Vic Kids. Several participants continue to create poppies for the **5000 Poppy** movements. The poppies will be donated to the RSL to help them raise funds at next years centenary celebrations. Some will also go to Canberra for a display and the War Memorial.

Some of the Tuesday group are working on patchwork projects and items to donate to **Wellsprings for Women fundraisers**.

Added to this some women are working on their own chosen craft projects.



Rita Poole
Teacher



PRODUCTIVE LEARNING IN AUSTRALIA

Retail Enterprise on its toes!

The participants in the PLA group have been busy creating several different product items to be sold at several venues next term. The items range from beaded lavender bags, bookmarks, trivets, decorated tea towels, cards and small boxes.

The participants also work on improving their IT skills, theory of retail, role plays, maths and language skills. They keep a journal which will lead to blog writing.

Creating something can be immensely rewarding and relaxing, and if it is all about designing 'women stuff', then our PLA ladies are matchless as they fashion trivets, mats, lavender bags, and hand towels. Enrolments to this course (Productive Learning in Australia) are open, so if you know anyone who might be interested, please suggest they join now and start their path towards working in retail or starting their own enterprise. To view more glimpses of the ladies at work, please visit: <https://www.facebook.com/Wellsprings-for-Women-Inc>



COMPUTERS FOR WORK AND STUDY



This fast-paced course at Wellsprings for Women is very popular as the learner group develops their digital skills by learning MS Office (Word, Power Point, and Excel) and get to integrate google tools and social media in everyday business. We are looking forward to seeing this group achieve their next milestone by enrolling into accredited courses relevant to their fields. Good luck to them!

If you think this course is the right starting point for you, please don't hesitate to enrol yourself or call us on (03) 9701 3740.

Rabia Babar
Teacher



VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR

Wellsprings Volunteers continue to provide their wide range of skills to keep our organisation functioning efficiently and effectively. Even more than this their enthusiasm and their diverse backgrounds and experiences add both depth and warmth to the learning experiences of our participants.



Above: Yvonne, Mahbooba, Mandy, June, Fatima, Robyn Above Right: Daniella



Robyn Erwin
Volunteer Coordinator



Over the first half of this year there has been an abundance of women wanting to join the Wellsprings volunteer program because they are inspired by our vision of supporting isolated women. These volunteers come from a wide range of backgrounds and are at various stages of their own life journeys but all want to offer their skills to support other women. One of the growing strengths of the program is the cultural diversity of our volunteers. This allows participants to receive support from someone from their own culture who can speak their language as well as providing strong role models for women to aspire to. I look forward to the introduction of new programs that will enable more volunteers to join in our work.



It is with sadness that we mark the passing of previous Wellsprings for Women volunteer Helen Pitman. Helen had an amazing ability to win over people and brought many women into Wellsprings for craft and other activities. Helen was a committed Home Visitation volunteer and absolutely enthusiastic about supporting each of the several isolated women she visited. She brought a lot of happiness to a lot of people. Our thoughts are with her friends and family at this time.



ADVOCACY

Our CEO Dalal Smiley spoke on 21st June at a Forum organized by Breast Cancer Network of Australia on the needs of women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, in accessing appropriate information and services.



WELLSPRINGS MENTOR PROGRAM

The Wellsprings Mentor Program has continued to run in 2017, providing our socially isolated participants with opportunities to access information and create pathways to further education hence breaking the cycle of social isolation, and also empowering women to live their lives more fully.

The social group meets every Wednesday. Participants are supported in coming together in a caring group environment to share information, knowledge, skills and life experience in order that each participant can



Yoga Group

reach their own personal goals. Programs include information sessions, yoga, zumba, group activities and one on one support. We would like to acknowledge the warm generosity of our volunteers, and the talents that they bring along with them to Wellsprings.

We look forward to working with our wonderful participants and volunteers all the time.

Rose Elias

Community Development Coordinator



PROJECT OFFICER

I have been working on students' enrolments, supporting the mentoring program and most importantly in the last month I have provided three parenting sessions to the participants in the Learning to Live in Australia program. The women found the sessions very useful and informative as it helped them to understand the challenges of raising children in Australia and how to address the cultural challenges that they will experience as parents while their children will also struggle to balance the cultural expectations of their parents with the need to fit in with their peers.

Marzia Wardak
Project Officer



ART FOR THE LOVE OF IT

Our year has been a difficult one for many of our participants. Bravely fighting major health battles and the loss of loved ones. The painting challenge this year has been everyone painting the same subject – it has been interesting for me to see how each person approached the subject of the 'Dancing Girls'.

June O'Doherty
Tutor



SEWING

Sewing class continues to be very popular. We are currently looking for new volunteers with good sewing skills, to assist teaching the Thursday class. Please contact Robyn on 9701 3740 if you know of anyone. We thank Dalal for obtaining funding to have all the sewing machines serviced and safety tagged. Our students are ever so grateful to be able to use well maintained machines. We look forward to a very productive second half of the year.

Sue Wilson
Tutor



EVENTS

IFTAR-DEAKIN UNIVERSITY – Our CEO was invited to deliver the keynote speech at Deakin University’s Annual Iftar Dinner on 13th June. The event was well attended and provided a great opportunity for networking and forging new relationships.

On 21 March we held a Taste of Harmony celebration which involved all staff, Board members and volunteers. It was a celebration of cultures which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone and highlighted the richness of our diversity and the collective joy we feel when we come together sharing our heritage, cultures and traditions, united by our vision to make our community a welcoming and inclusive one for everybody.



Volunteers and students



LIFELINE DV ALERT TRAINING

Wellsprings hosted the training by Lifeline to frontline workers in the settlement sector on family violence. Eleven of Wellsprings women including staff and volunteers participated in the training on 26 and 27 of June. The training was essential in helping us to Recognise, Respond and Refer cases of family violence.

REACHING OUT IN CASEY

Wellsprings staff held an interactive information stall at Arbourlea Community Centre in North Cranbourne on the 16th of June to promote Wellsprings programs and services to families in the area. The event was well attended and we managed to engage the interest of many women and their children in what we have to offer. Furthermore, we will be providing programs for women in Casey which will make it easier for them to access.



SISTERWORKS



Our CEO met with Luz Restrepo, the CEO of Sisterworks which is a social enterprise that engages migrant and refugee women to develop skills and produce products that they sell at various outlets including Sisterworks' own shop in Richmond. More than eighty women are currently in this venture which is starting to generate incomes for the women involved. Wellsprings is currently exploring the feasibility of establishing our own social enterprise following the success of our PLA program and the potential to take it to the next level.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Our CEO has joined the Catholic Social Services Domestic and Family Violence Working Group which supports organisations in the Catholic services sector to develop approaches to preventing violence against women and respond appropriately to disclosure. The Working Group has developed an information kit and is currently exploring the development of a training package on family violence relevant to the sector.



PLEASE SAVE THESE DATES

General Meeting: Thursday 21st September 2017 - 2 – 4pm

Wellsprings Annual Dinner: Friday 17th November 2017- 6:30pm