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WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE SOUTH EAST  
ANNUAL REPORT 2009

*Public Internet Access Launch*



*Launch of Cockatoo NILS  
(No Interest Loans Scheme)*



*Chinese Mothers Group*



*ADEC Group  
Action on Disability within  
Ethnic Communities*



*Women's Market*



*Go Red for Women*

# WHISE

## *Chairperson's Report* *Gail Quilliam*

What a year Australia and our wider international communities have had – from natural disasters, to global financial crises, to emergence of new diseases, and continuing distress among nations and within nations, which have all caused concern and had an impact on everyone.

At our WHISE level, we have seen how the external developments, movements and crises have affected our clients, our service partners, and the capacity of our governments, at all levels, to respond effectively, simply and quickly. This has obviously had an impact on the available support and funding to care for people in our communities who need our help.

At WHISE we continue to develop services and programs that can be adapted and tailored for differing groups of women, and for different locations across our region. We have become firmly embedded in the Dandenong community, and our links across our region grow stronger and more connected with the mainstream service providers. We thank them all for their continued support.

We have continued our focus on the needs of women, and those who are important to them, as we work to empower women, and help strengthen their capacity and skills in the various roles they take up – partner, friend, family, community member, employee, wise elder.

Externally our advocacy work, in partnership with organisations such as VCOSS and WHAV, has been successful – with the transfer of the abortion legislation out of the criminal code to the health services code; with the winning of reasonable price adjustments for community service providers; and with closer links to our local government and State representatives on a range of issues.

We have set up a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ethnic Communities Council of the South East, confirming our commitment to working with that Council towards a just and fair society, especially for those of different backgrounds and newly arrived in Australia.

I would like to thank the CEO and staff of WHISE, both past and present, whose dedication, hard work and support has made WHISE what it is today. In particular, thanks to Tricia Elliott, our CEO, for her continued hard work, enthusiasm and strategic planning.

At Council level we have regretfully said farewell to Elaine Hall-Foote, who has worked for many years to support WHISE at all levels, and has seen WHISE develop significantly over that time. We miss Elaine's wise input very much, and wish her the very best that life has to offer over the coming years. We also said farewell to Wendy Mason, who has been of invaluable support during the period she has been on the Council.

Lastly, I thank the Council Members for their guidance, support, commitment and advice during a year which has again tested our patience, wisdom, and ability to think creatively about our future, for the benefit of women in our region. Thank you to every one of you.

## *CEO's Report* *Tricia Elliott*

Once again the Annual Report gives us time to reflect on the past year - and to see what we have achieved, and what we have learned. It is often difficult to know the value of what we do, when we are so focused on what needs to be done next - so to all here at WHISE: take a bow! You have all contributed so much, and assisted so many women, and their partners and families, to find what they needed to take the next step for themselves.

Our students, volunteers and peer educators have contributed so much to WHISE over the year - not only in keeping all our programs going, but also in suggesting new ideas / new ways of assisting our clients. It is a joy to have so many women involved in our work, and to see them making their own career paths into the future.

But it is especially to our WHISE staff that I want to say 'thankyou' - for all those times that you have contributed extra, found a solution, suggested a new way - and laughed and supported everyone (myself included) in doing so.

It is a privilege and a delight to be working with you. Thank you.

# W H I S E

## *The Year in Reflection*

### **Our priorities in 2008 - 2009**

- Improving mental health and wellbeing
- Preventing violence against women
- Improving sexual and reproductive health

### **Our strategies**

To work within a dual strategy at all times, as follows:

- To address the specific, immediate needs of our individual clients.
- To work systemically, in advocating for our clients, influencing decisions on resource allocation, and assisting to build an integrated and holistic service system for all clients, including marginalised women.
- To seek additional resources and actively direct projects and training into the identified areas of need.
- To work collaboratively with local service providers and women from the community in the planning and implementation of the initiatives.

### **Our activities**

Advocacy – at all levels of government, to improve the resourcing of women's health and wellbeing services.

Health promotion and capacity building – to employ community development strategies in assisting communities to promote health and wellbeing to all.

Community participation – to invite, encourage and support participation from community members and the general public in identifying need, developing responses, and implementing strategies

Individual development – to assist our clients to develop their knowledge, skills and ability, in accessing services and managing their own health and wellbeing.

Direct services – to identify gaps in the type and/or level of services needed by women in our catchment, and to work to bring in the resources necessary to fill those gaps.

Partnership – to see our work as part of a continuing effort by all service providers to address our clients' needs, and to work in partnership wherever possible in providing such services.

### **Snapshot of what we did**

#### ***Priority 1: Improving mental health and wellbeing***

Clients:

Approximately 400 women participating in Workplace health promotion, Talking Health for Hairdressers, Community Kitchens, Self-Help and Support Groups, Work Orientation program, Volunteer program, Wellbeing activities  
approximately 650 women participating in community education and health information sessions, and receiving information via mailing list.

#### ***Priority 2: Preventing violence against women***

Clients:

Approximately 3,500 secondary students (girls) participating in our Respect Protect Connect program.

Approximately 50 women from CALD backgrounds participating in family violence information sessions.

Approximately 150 women participating in White Ribbon Day activities.

Approximately 1,200 men of CALD backgrounds participating in the CALD Men's program, aimed to assist men of CALD background to settle more effectively into Australian society, particularly in terms of understanding gender roles and accepting difference.

#### ***Priority 3: Sexual and Reproductive Health***

Approximately 350 women participating in community consultations (FARREP program, PSST program).

Online information and resources to women across our region.

Approximately 150 women participating in World Aids Day activities.

Advocacy to all southern region MPs in relation to abortion legislative reform.

#### ***Partners:***

Four Primary Care Partnerships

Ten Councils / Shires

50 service organisations

100 community groups, networks and support groups

**Key peak bodies:** WHAV, VCOSS, DVC

#### ***Media and Publicity:***

Approximately 10 items published in local newspapers

Four spots on local community radio

Participation in Neighbourhood Day

## *New Services and Opportunities*

### *• Transition to Australia*

Australia is home to numerous cultures, communities and people from different backgrounds, making us one of the most diverse countries in the world today. It has been and still is a challenge for new arrivals to make connections with mainstream Australia, especially if they are dealing with the emotional, social and physical effects of leaving their country of birth. Newly arrived women, men and families strive to become familiar with our system, structures and culture – often with little assistance and understanding from others.

This year we have developed an “orientation” kit for new arrivals. This kit covers, firstly, some of the basic areas that a new arrival needs to consider: identification, accommodation, education, employment, transport, emergency services and places to go for assistance.

Secondly, the kit provides information about Australian culture, norms, work culture, and Australian slang – recognising that every culture has certain behaviours and norms, with meanings associated with movements or gestures which may be very foreign to new arrivals. Often these differences are the root of misunderstandings or conflicts. Hence our Kit.

This kit will be a resource provided to new arrivals such as immigrants, refugees and international students to assist in their transition to Australia.

Language, financial and communication skills are considered essential for anyone trying to settle into a new country. We have therefore supplemented our Orientation Kit with three programs focusing on basic and essential skills:

- \* Information Technology literacy training.
- \* Financial Literacy (Understanding Money) Training.
- \* Information sessions for job seekers.

### *• Movement Program*

The Movement Program in 2009 has had great success continuing to provide strength training and falls prevention programs for older adults living in retirement villages and nursing homes, with improvements being demonstrated in self-esteem, balance, walking endurance and overall quality of life.

Expanding from working primarily with older adults, the Movement Program is now also focusing on the health needs of children, youth and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities, as these individuals experience increased social isolation, reduced health outcomes and reduced quality of life.

### *• Autism Project and Photography on the Move*

The Movement Program has established two major disability programs called ‘Appreciating Autism’ and ‘Photography on the Move’.

Appreciating Autism is a research project which has collected data from mainstream schools in the Southern Metropolitan region, discovering the main challenges that mainstream schools and teachers are facing for students with Asperger’s syndrome and Autism.

In addition, we have received survey results from parents of a child or children with Asperger’s syndrome and Autism, and have developed a parent support group, which provides an environment for parents to share their challenges, experiences and positive aspects of parenting a child with Asperger’s syndrome or Autism.

The Photography on the Move program has been based in three special education schools in the City of Casey and City of Greater Dandenong and was developed to utilise the benefits of walking and photography to encourage school aged individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities to explore their environment, express their creativity, and develop their social and linguistic skills.

The rewarding aspect of the Photography on the Move program was observing the individuals’ rise in confidence, social skills, and attention to detail. Some of the photographs taken during our 9 week program were incredible, providing inspiration and a sense of achievement for WHISE staff, teaching staff, students and peers.

We plan to continue the success of both the Appreciating Autism and Photography on the Move programs in 2010, and look forward to empowering more parents, teachers, and individuals with an intellectual and/or physical disability, to realise their potential not just their challenges.

## Special Events

- International Women's Day*

**Celebrating International Women's Day ....** " we must celebrate what women in our society have achieved, but at the same time we have to work towards safer and healthier futures for all women. For, simple as it may seem, if we achieve this for women, we will of course achieve this for men too and then we will all benefit. WHISE continues to work to improving the capacity and ability of women to live, work and relax in our society. In helping women to achieve their potential, we know we are helping everyone – women, men, and children."..... [Dandenong Journal March 2009]



- ECCOSE (Memorandum of Understanding)*

**"Signed on for Harmony** - Women's Health in the South East and the Ethnic Communities Council of the South East have joined forces in signing a Memorandum of Understanding pledging to work hand-in-hand to promote cultural harmony and accept diversity. Both organisations are committed to working together to advocate for CALD Communities and to encourage migrant communities in the Southern Region to take part in activities which will help them in every aspect of their life, so they can enjoy all the richness that Australia offers"..... [Dandenong Journal, October 2009].



- PIAP Launch*

**WHISE move**

Women's Health in the South East (WHISE), based at 15 Scott Street, Dandenong, has been granted \$7500 to provide Public Internet Access, particularly focusing on disadvantaged women, and women from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



Local Member John Pandazopoulos launched the PIAP service at WHISE, and said: "The provision of this program by WHISE is a great step in encouraging women to learn more about the Internet and how to use this communication tool easily and wisely."..... [Dandenong Journal August 2009]

- Multicultural Kitchen*

**"Multi-cultural Community cooked up a storm & received a qualification**

As a part of our community building program, WHISE established a multi-cultural kitchen in February 2009, and we offered Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) Multi-Cultural Community Kitchen to our clients in partnership with Skills Plus.



WHISE is happy to announce that we have almost come to the end of our very first Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Operations) Multi-Cultural Community Kitchen course."..... [July 2009]

# WHISE

## Council

Gail Quilliam *Chairperson*  
Xiaoli Ma *Vice-Chairperson*  
Maureen Mirabella *Treasurer*  
Heather Gerraty *Assistant Treasurer*  
Elaine Hall-Foote *General Member*  
*(resigned June 2009)*  
Carmel Croft *General Member*  
Annabel Fegan *General Member*  
Eva Orr *General Member*

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## Staff Members

Tricia Elliott *CEO*  
Helena Bishop *CWCC & Training Co-ord.*  
Iresha Buthgamuwa *Health Promotion Advocate*  
Kristine Hill *Health Promotion Worker*  
Marlene Hoff *Community Kitchen Co-ord.*  
Kerry Jones *Administration Officer*  
Jessica Lettieri *Reception/Admin. Assistant*  
Diane Lucas *Finance (contractor)*  
Amrit Preet *Health Promotion Worker*  
Ruchita Ruchita *Health Promotion Worker*  
Robyn Smith *Exercise Physiologist*  
Udani Waidyarathna *Community Devel. Worker*  
Hayley Wesson *RPC Co-ordinator*  
Dongmei Zhang *Health Promotion Worker*

\* \* \* \* \*

## Congratulations to Students on Placement

Assma Ahamed	Corinne Boodoo
Sally Cochran	Mariam Deng
Belinda Fisher	Adina Heilbrunn
Liz Hutchinson	Jade
Harminder Kaur	Manasa Korada
Shruti Mahajan	Mamta
Namratha Patel	Navreet
Miranda Peck	Amrit Preet
Priscilla	Sarah Roberts
Ruchita Ruchita	Rukshana
Manjot Sharma	Jittimaorn Sriboonjit
Naliy Wannast	

\* \* \* \* \*

## Thanks to Our Volunteers

### Reception/Administration

Roslyn Heydon Prema Kodikarage

### CWCC

Sedigheh Alizadeh	Sherryn Bartlett
Tina Dipetta	Clare Duggan
Annapurna Erla	Claire Ferrier
Belinda Fisher	Pat French
Subhashini Gamage	Lee Ci Han
Amber Harthy	Joan Higgins
Sarah Hopton	Hyeonji (Jade) Kim
Sonja Kaiser	Inna Kanevsky
Nuri Kim	Phyong Thi Lan Le
Mary Manic	Milena Matic
Connie Pacheco	Nora Peralta
Hanh Thi Pham	Myra Purcell
Darshirni Raman	Khulud (Lola) Sabawi
Navsheil Singh	Kristy Steel
Venisha Sujay	Chloe Trindall
Qurat-ul-Ain Usman	Naliy Wannasit
Koreen Williams	

## Volunteers (cont'd)

### RPC

Renay Almond  
Erryn Arbuthnott  
Mallory Barclay  
Crystal Bruton  
Laura Buerckner  
Danielle Bryan  
Avrill Burrows  
Imogen Carmel  
Rosanne Cassell  
Anastasia Clendinnen  
Maddie Collins  
Gina Cornehs  
Natalie Devitsakis  
Annie Douglas  
Claire Ferrier  
Sarah Grose  
Alyson La'Brooy  
Kristy Lee  
Jenica Lim-Young  
Lauren Paterson  
Melissa Pattison  
Narumon Sae-Chow  
Gena Schirmer  
Isabelle Waters  
Lisa White

### Community Kitchen

Sylvia Arendze  
Kay Burdett  
Brenda Haines  
Michael & Toni Kernaghan  
Ley McIntosh  
Joy McIver  
Abbie Mills-Franklin  
Dawn Peacock  
Edna Runerman  
Patricia Scully  
Bernadette Stevens

## Women's Health in the South East Inc.

**Address:** 15 Scott Street,  
Dandenong Vic 3175

**Phone:** (03) 9794 8677

**Fax:** (03) 9793 1866

**Email:** [whise@whise.org.au](mailto:whise@whise.org.au)

**Web:** [www.whise.org.au](http://www.whise.org.au)

**Contact:** Tricia Elliott, CEO

**Mobile:** 0438 201 491

**Email:** [ceo@whise.org.au](mailto:ceo@whise.org.au)

