

# Wellsprings AGM

Wed 16 September 2009

This gathering was attended by approximately 60 people (mostly women). There were some significant changes since the last AGM. The main one being that Veronica Hassett has taken over the management role from Sr Ann Halpin who retired last year. Ann, who is currently very ill, was the founding Manager of Wellsprings. She had been in that role for 15 years and is very much loved and admired by all with whom she worked. It was very obvious that she was missed not just by all who gathered this particular afternoon, but in general by all who are, by whatever means, connected to this organisation. A special message from Ann was read out to both the board members and staff of Wellsprings. Advice that Veronica received from Ann was: "What worked for me in my time at Wellsprings does not necessarily have to work for you, and this is your time at Wellsprings." Think this is probably wise advice for all who take over prominent roles in organisations.

There has also been a change in a few of the board members. The role of Chair, which Gail van der Heyden occupied, has been filled by Ann Austin. Considering these changes, it was quite timely and fitting that Sr Bernadette Keating pbvm gave a presentation on the challenges of coping with change.

That Wellsprings is of great value to the women who visit shows by their personal comments:

- Wellsprings is part of my life, I'd be lost without it.
- I wouldn't have any contact with other people without it.
- I miss Wellsprings when I am unable to come here.
- Coming here, you can say whatever you need to and people understand you and fully respect you.
- We care for each other, and we worry if one of the women doesn't show up for class.
- It doesn't matter how many attend class, it is the spirit of the place.
- I consider Wellsprings as part of my keeping well program.



The Wellsprings for Women program is based on the philosophy of the Community Development model of empowerment for women. They provide holistic programs which are regularly evaluated and monitored to respond to the needs of the women. The program covers areas such as welfare, educational, recreational, artistic, self cared and skilled based needs. They work with women from many different countries. One of their most vital programs is the Home Visitation Program which the City of Greater Dandenong has agreed to fund for the next three years.

The three symbols that capture the spirit of Wellsprings are:

- The Lantern – Proud member of the Presentation Sisters who have been in Dandenong for 97 years.
- The Well – symbol of nurturing. Where women collect water, gather and share stories and make friends.
- The Quilt – Record of the journeys and their comments on freedom.

After the official part of the meeting there was ample opportunity to meet staff, board members, women who participate in programs and visitors whilst enjoying some delicious food and drink. There was also a huge cake in celebration of Gail's birthday.

*Anyone wishing to send well wishes to Ann Halpin can mail their letters etc to Wellsprings, 79 Langhorne Street, Dandenong 3173, and the staff will ensure that it is passed on to Ann.*