



# IMMIGRANT WOMEN'S HEALTH SERVICE

Annual Report 2008 – '09

## Our Mission

Immigrant Women's Health Service is committed to empowering women and valuing their life experiences.

We work with compassion, unity and mutual respect.

### Main Objectives:

- To provide a service that caters for the developmental needs of CALD immigrant and refugee women
- To continue to develop and maintain health education programs that will foster healthy attitudes, habits and behaviours
- To organise health campaigns and provide information on a broad range of topics in culturally appropriate forms
- To continue to document the health and developmental needs of women in the local area
- To involve women in consultations and self-identification of their developmental needs.
- To foster community development with a view to enable local women to develop informal support mechanisms

## Services provided

The program incorporates a holistic approach that is characterized by the promotion of health, both mental and physical, to women participating in the various programs.

Immigrant Women's Health Service (IWHS) provides the following services:

- Health education and support programs
- Health information services
- Counselling and referral
- Support groups
- Various campaigns to lobby and advocate for women's rights and well-being
- Outreach clinical and legal services
- English language classes

## Philosophy & Funding

Immigrant Women's Health Service is a community based women's service, committed to providing a range of high quality information, referral and advocacy services for immigrant and refugee women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD).

Immigrant Women's Health Service is a non-government and not for profit service receiving the majority of its funding from NSW Health through Sydney South West Area Health Service – NGO grant program.

Other funding sources that are project based and are time limited include:

- Family And Community Services & Indigenous Affairs (FACSIA) through the Smith Family funding the Arabic & Assyrian Parenting project.
- Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC) funding the Middle Eastern Senior Women's group.

## Snapshot of services in 2008-09

IWHS has provided migrant and refugee women from CALD communities with a range of health education sessions, programs, courses, projects, information and referral and many more services to address their health needs and build their capacity. IWHS has promoted the physical, emotional and psychological well-being of women through making new friends in a new land, sharing of skills, and access to knowledge and experiences in a safe and supportive environment. The service has delivered a number of partnership programs for women from different ethnic communities such as Vietnamese, Cambodian, Cantonese, Arabic Speaking, Assyrian, Spanish Speaking, Swahili, Sudanese, Mandanian, Turkish, Chinese and Filipino, and there was a significant participation of women in all programs as outlined below.

Migrant and refugee women have significantly benefited both directly and indirectly from participating in the range of opportunities made available to them at both centres (Fairfield and Cabramatta). On a weekly basis, women have gained knowledge and confidence from health talks and information sessions of mainstream service providers. Also, they had overcome their isolation and improved their emotional and psychological well-being through talking, sharing stories, access counselling, learning new skills and making new friends in a safe and supportive environment. In the long-term, they are building their strength and confidence throughout the settlement process where integrating into the wider Australian community is more feasible and positive.

In addition there have been significant projects that IWHS have initiated and participated in, in collaboration with a range of government and non-

government organisations, in particular the Arabic Assyrian Parenting project with the Smith Family C4C initiative , the group work and counselling with STARTTS and Transcultural Mental Health, as well as the diverse projects with Fairfield City Council.

### **AT A GLANCE:**

- 9,739 were the total number of women who attended weekly group programs (occasions of service).
- 85 women attend English classes every week
- 23 parenting programs for the Arabic Speaking and Assyrian communities were conducted which was attended by 2,875 participants (occasions of service).
- Over 250 information sessions were conducted
- 10 new groups were established to address the needs of eight ethnic communities
- 6 New partnerships were established
- Childminding was provided to 2000 children
- 1000 women received incidental counselling
- 312 women received free legal advice
- 5200 phone referrals were addressed

### **SOME HIGHLIGHTS:**

- 19 Vietnamese women visited the community health centre for the first time
- A refugee African woman received a University Scholarship
- 3 Swahili women are now working as Child Care workers
- 5 Mandanian women enrolled in TAFE to complete a Diploma in Welfare studies
- 15 Assyrian women started their catering project
- 7 Mandanian women completed their hairdressing courses and are working in the industry
- 8 women who had experienced domestic violence secured accommodation permanently through the lobbying of the organisation
- Women from 7 different nationalities are now attending local council meetings and have joined political parties.
- 5 women were able to travel overseas to visit their families after the budgeting course they attended at the centre

- 34 families noted a significant improvement in their relationship with their children following the Arabic Assyrian Parenting project
- 7 older women from the seniors group indicated an improvement in their health and well-being from attending the support group
- 6 Indian women indicated an improvement to their health and in managing their stress levels as a result of participating in the yoga group
- 17 Assyrian women survived through extreme domestic violence experiences.
- 22 Arabic speaking women were able to attend the Family Court and advocate for their rights independently.
- 19 Spanish speaking women developed a market project where they were able to sell their hand craft products
- 17 Turkish women bought a stall at the local markets to sell their jewellery which is recently available on the internet as well.
- 10 volunteers entered the workforce after training at the centre and acquiring a reference with local experience.

## Client demographics

The major users of the service were migrant and refugee women and children from CALD communities in the Fairfield Local Government Area. There was an average of 360 women who attended weekly group sessions with a total of 9,739 occasions of services in group programs.

The majority were Cambodian, Vietnamese and Cantonese speakers, Arabic Speaking, Assyrian, Mandanian and Sudanese from Fairfield, Cabramatta, Bonnyrigg, Canley Vale, Canley Heights, St Johns Parks, and other surrounding suburbs. Significant number of clients are residents of Liverpool , Bankstown, Merrylands and Guildford areas.

Most of the women are aged between 25 and 70 with poor or little English, lack of knowledge and understanding of mainstream services and approximately 75% had or are experiencing family violence and hardship. 50% of clients are single women and are predominantly unemployed or work part-time.

## Health Education & support programs

IWHS initiated a range of programs aiming to facilitate community development initiatives and support mechanisms for women accessing the service. The women regularly attend the group meetings and have come to forge strong bonds of friendship and rapport that developed as a result of the

informal support structure within the groups. The following women's groups meet at each centre regularly:

The women's health education program has evoked the participation of over 9,739 women in its various group activities. With over 20 groups, and women from 19 different backgrounds attending them, IWHS is growing from strength to strength.

Arabic Women's Support Group	570
Assyrian Women's Group	800
Mandanian Women's Support group	480
Middle Eastern Senior Women's group	256
Spanish Women's Group	544
Serbian Women's support group	416
Swahili Women's group	350
Turkish Women's group	544
Cambodian Women's support group	812
Spanish Healthy Awareness group	280
Chinese Older Women's group	1,288
Vietnamese Women's Health group	1,092

#### **NEW GROUPS ESTABLISHED:**

Sudanese Women's Group	256
Swahili Women's group	350
Swahili Mother's and Children Playgroup	240
Turkish Women's Carers' Support Group	192
Women's Unity	168
NESH Women's Support Group	112
STARTTS partnership group	098
Filipino Women's support group	224
Cambodian Parent Support group	420
Vietnamese Working Women support group	447

#### **Child minding:**

The provision of free child minding is an integral part of the services offered at both centres (Fairfield and Cabramatta) which puts into practice our access and equity principles in offering all women the opportunity to participate in the range of programs, projects and activities available at the centres. Childminding is offered five days a week during school terms. The total number of children who accessed childminding is 2000 (occasions of service, 1600 at Fairfield and 400 at Cabramatta).

## Health Information Services

At IWHS, programs and activities are delivered with the aim of empowering women across all determinants of health- physical, mental, socio-economic and cultural. These determinants often overlap to shape our health information sessions and activities. Over 250 sessions for more than 20 groups were organized for the women attending the weekly group sessions covering the following topics:

<p><b>Physical Well-being</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Quality Use of Medicines (5 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Healthy Bones- Falls Prevention, Osteoporosis, Back Care (7 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Dental Care (2 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Healthy Eating – Nutrition, Importance of exercise, food safety (5 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Gentle exercise sessions &amp; Tai Chi (6 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Women’s sexual health - visit to the health nurse, Pap tests, menopause information (5 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Chronic diseases’ information- Diabetes, Heart Disease, Breast Cancer, Stroke, Incontinence (8 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Deafness</li> <li>▪ Sleep disorders (2 sessions) HIV Awareness and Prevention</li> <li>▪ Pain Management</li> <li>▪ Hep C Awareness and Prevention</li> <li>▪ Hep B and Liver cancer</li> <li>▪ Mind your memory</li> <li>▪ Palliative care</li> <li>▪ Diabetes Awareness</li> <li>▪ Stroke Awareness</li> <li>▪ Obesity</li> <li>▪ Arthritis</li> <li>▪ Bladder control</li> <li>▪ Eye care</li> </ul>
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<p><b>Mental/Psychological Well-being</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Memory and Dementia (5 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Depression (4 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Self Esteem (7 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Stress and Anxiety (3 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Isolation and Adjusting to a new culture</li> <li>• Issues of Identity, ways of relating to others Respite care</li> <li>▪ Positive thinking- 3 sessions</li> <li>▪ Body image</li> </ul>
<p><b>Socio-Economic Well-being</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sustainable living</li> <li>▪ Quarantine information for travellers (5 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Money management session (6 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Personal safety on the street (3 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Prolonged effects of DV (4 sessions) Will and Estates</li> <li>▪ Personal safety at home and when travelling</li> <li>▪ Will and Power of Attorney</li> <li>▪ Home and Community Care</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recreational/Craft</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Outings/excursion (12 trips)</li> <li>▪ Cooking (4 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Craft sessions- Greeting card making, decorative tissue box covers, crocheting, knitting, jewellery making, sewing</li> <li>▪ Aqua Aerobics (4 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Basket weaving (4 sessions)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Family well-being</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Communicating with children (4 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Parenting (6 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Contraception</li> <li>▪ Dealing with Gambling (3 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Dealing with Drugs Contraceptive health</li> </ul>

<p><b>Other vital topics</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tenancy Advice (2 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Legal Information -Family Law, Wills (3 sessions)</li> <li>▪ Census Information</li> <li>▪ Centrelink Information (3 sessions)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other Programs</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ethnic Communities Sustainable Living Project (8 weeks)</li> <li>▪ Female Genital Mutilation Program in partnership with the Cumberland Hospital</li> <li>▪ In partnership with SSWAHS for the BCE programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 'Women Growing Older' (4 programs - 8 weeks each)</li> <li>○ 'Women &amp; Children Growing together in a New Country' (6weeks)</li> <li>○ 'Living with Choices' (6 weeks)</li> <li>○ 'New Healthy Women' (8 weeks)</li> <li>○ 'Living Well in the Middle Years'(2 weeks)</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Environmental Education: Energy saving Fire safety education- 3 sessions</li> </ul>

## Counselling & Referral

In partnership with the Service for the Trauma and Torture Rehabilitation Service (STARTTS) and Transcultural Mental Health (TMH), group and individual counselling is offered on a weekly basis. On average STARTTS runs the weekly counselling group and provides counselling to 6 individual clients. TMH provides counselling to 5 clients per week and IWHS staff provide accidental counselling to 20 clients per week which is a total of over 1000 clients per annum.

The main presenting issues in counselling include; domestic violence, relationships, settlement issues, migration, grief and loss, family separation and mental health issues.

IWHS staff generally receive 90 personal referrals and 100 phone referrals per week. Referrals and information is provided particularly in relation to Housing & accommodation, Centrelink, charity organisations for emergency relief, settlement related information.

## Lobbying & Advocacy

IWHS facilitated a range of opportunities for women to participate in campaigns to raise awareness of women's issues, struggles and achievements; these included; International Women's Day, Senior's Week celebration, Refugee week, White Ribbon, Community Care for Domestic Violence. The political education project in partnership with Fairfield City

Council was a successful and empowering initiative as migrant and refugee women became vocal participants and visible representatives in local government politics.

The Centre is also quite active in local interagencies and networks such as Fairfield Immigrant and Refugee Women Network which has been hosted at IWHS premises over the last 3 years and a staff representative is a convenor of the network. The Manager has also been on the Premiere Council for Domestic Violence (DV) as an advisory member on DV issues in particular for the CALD communities. Currently all 9 members are involved in writing up the strategic framework. In addition the Manager is on the Community Relations Commission Regional Committee for Liverpool and Macarthur areas representing local community needs.

Individual lobbying and advocacy work in relation to individual client needs takes place on a daily basis particularly with access to services and systems. IWHS works from a holistic model to health care and takes the woman and her life circumstances into account whilst providing a supportive and safe environment for women to make informed choices and take control of their lives.

## Outreach Clinical and Legal Services

IWHS is committed to increasing women's capacity through providing support, information and guidance to empower women to make well informed decisions about their bodies and their lives. In partnership with Legal Women's Resource Centre, an outreach legal clinic is run in the Fairfield centre once a fortnight and this is generally accessed by approximately 12 clients every fortnight.

An on-going Women's Health clinic is run in partnership with Bankstown Health Service which provides check ups, referral and other related health issues such as breast check, pap smears, continence assessments, advice on pregnancy and pregnancy tests, a check after the baby is born, menopause, and contraception, etc. The clinic was held 13 times and provided services to 50 women from CALD communities, and most of them lived in south-west Sydney. Appointments were arranged on a fortnightly basis and TIS phone interpreters were used for most consultations.

## English Language Classes

The English classes have always aimed at helping CALD women overcome the barriers in settlement through acquiring good English skills in conversation and literacy skills. The classes provide access to learning English in a safe and relaxed environment with the help of the friendly teaching staff, who in turn are dedicated volunteers and or TAFE Outreach teachers. Currently, five classes, spanning over three days per week, are held at IWHS Fairfield and Cabramatta. The classes range from beginner level to advance.

In partnership with the House of Welcome, IWHS also offers English classes to newly arrived refugees, who are unable to access other free services due to their visa status.

- 4 English classes - beginner level to advanced level across both centres – 2400 occasions of service
- English for early beginners – for newly arrived refugees – 600 occasions of service

## Vocational / Recreational Courses

IWHS has continued in its tradition of arranging vocational and skills training program in the areas of sewing, art and craft, child minding skills. We also offer Yoga sessions for women through our 'Better Health through Yoga' program held every Wednesday and 'Computer Literacy for Beginners', a project that is part of the Unlimited Potential initiative by Smith Family on Tuesdays.

- Diploma in Fashion Industry – this course was held for 6 months and was attended by 23 CALD women.
- Diploma Child Care course – two courses were held to cater for the Mandanian women and Swahili women. Each course ran for 6 months and a total of 35 Mandanian and Swahili women completed the course.
- First Aid Course – two courses were held, the first was attended by 21 Sudanese women and the second course attended by 25 Mandanian women.
- Computer literacy for beginners – this was attended by 15 CALD women - ongoing
- Better Health through Yoga- this has been a very popular class where we've recently started a second class to cater for the increased demand, on average 17 CALD women attend this class.

## Update on Special Projects

- **Arabic Assyrian Parenting project** funded by FACSIA through a Smith Family C4C initiative. This aimed to develop a culture appropriate parenting model especially for Arabic speaking and Assyrian communities in Fairfield. The project ran for three years and there will be another extended year due to the continuing demands from the community. The project developed an education program

which has been delivered to both communities throughout Fairfield LGA with a primary focus on children's personalities. In total 23 programs were conducted and each program was attended by 20-25 participants, amounting to 2,875 occasions of service.

- **“A message to refugee women”** CDSE art project aimed to give migrant and refugee women a chance to express their journey through the arts. Two group counselling sessions were held to prepare women for the project followed by artwork of bag designs as a symbol of throwing the baggage one carries with them. The project aimed to explore this baggage particularly in relation to grief and loss issues. The project was launched by Fairfield City Council Mayor in November 2008 and participants were presented with a bag of their choice as a gift to continue the journey of settlement. 30 women participated in this project over a three month period where they met on a weekly basis.
- **Swahili Playgroup** – this was funded by Playgroup Australia which taught Swahili mums to carry on the project after funding ceased. 12 mothers and 18 children participated in this group.
- **Down There DVD** – this was a partnership project with Family Planning Association where staff participated in the making of the DVD in discussing the issues for migrant women and sexuality.
- **Hep C Hepatitis Program** – staff participated in the development of a TV and radio community awareness campaign discussing the effects of Hep C on the family dynamics in ethnic communities.
- **Political Education** – in partnership with Fairfield City Council and Community Relations Commission this project aimed to empower women and raise awareness of the political system in Australia. Four campaigns were held as part of this project and as an outcome 73 CALD women voted for the first time in the Local Government Council elections.
- **Inter-woven skill sharing project** – in partnership with Fairfield City Council, this project aims to work with Cabra Vale Senior Citizens cottage to facilitate the sharing of weaving skills across to the CALD community. This project commenced in May '09
- **Park upgrade** – In partnership with Fairfield City Council, women will have the opportunity to be involved in the art work and the consultations for the upgrade of Cabramatta park. This project commenced in May '09

## Women's Words

*"We benefited a lot from the project. We shared with friends what we knew and learnt from it and invited them to join us. We were very happy and especially loved the birthday party as we never celebrated it at home. With weekly health talks, we learnt to improve our way of eating and did more exercises."*

**Vietnamese Women's Health Group**

*"I learnt more from the group every week. I gained more confidence in socialising with people. I used to be very shy, but I am not that shy anymore."*

**Turkish Women's Health Group**

*"I benefited a great deal from the project both my English language and my general knowledge. After more than a year with the group, I am a much happier person and have more friends."*

**Cambodian Middle Age Women Group**

*"The project had a big impact on my life. I felt much better and I am happier person. I used to be lonely and isolated, and knew nothing about available mainstream services. After involving in the group, I am a stronger person."*

**Middel Eastern Senior Women's Group**

## Partnerships Strengthened & Established

IWHS strongly believes in partnership to achieve its goals in meeting the needs of migrant and refugee women through coming together with a diverse range of services with specialist skills and resources who share similar passion and goals. Our sincere appreciation goes to the following organizations who continue to make our wish list and the dreams and aspirations of many women a reality.

- The Smith Family, C4C
- Serbian Orthodox Welfare Association
- Play Group Australia
- House of Welcome
- Miller TAFE Outreach
- Granville TAFE
- House of Welcome
- Non English Speaking women's Housing
- Multicultural Respite Network
- Fairfield City Council
- Fairfield Division of General Practise
- Wetherill Park Police
- Women's Health New South Wales
- Seniors Peer Education Centre
- Benevolent Society

- Australia Quarantine Inspection Service
- Fairfield City Council
- Liverpool City Council
- Fairfield Hospital
- Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre
- Multicultural Family Planning Association
- Service for the Trauma & Torture Service
- Cambodian Australian Welfare Council (CAWC)
- Asian Women At Work
- Philippine Australian Community Services Incorporated (PACSI)
- Cabramatta Community Health Centre
- Fairfield Legal Aid
- BCE program, South West Sydney Area Health Service
- Liverpool Multicultural Health Service
- Vietnamese Women Association
- Australian Nursing Home Foundation
- Cumberland Women Health
- Cabramatta Fire Station
- Bankstown Health Service
- Liverpool Hospital
- NSW Transcultural Mental Health Centre
- Women's Legal Service NSW
- Medicine Information and Peer Support

Some of the partnership programs that were established include:

**Parent Support program** delivered in partnership with the Cambodian Parents Support Group. This group was facilitated by two children workers from CAWC and a support worker from Immigrant Women's Health Service. The group catered for mothers and children age 0 to 5 from the Cambodian community. As part of the health promotion, workshops on parenting skills were included for young mothers.

**Vietnamese Working Women Program** known as Cabramatta Support Group for Vietnamese Working Women was established in term 2 of 2008 in partnership with Asian Women At Work. The group aimed to empower Vietnamese working women in low paid job with the knowledge of rights at work and confidence to improve their career path, and to provide them with opportunities to learn, share and network.

**Filipino Women Community Support Program** delivered in partnership with Philippine Australian Community Services Incorporated (PACSI), to promote physical, emotional, psychological well-being of Filipino women in NSW through provision of health talks, education programs, and social group activities.

## Management, Staff & Volunteers

Immigrant Women's Health Service is a not for profit women's health service. It is an incorporated association overseen by a board of Management with 20 staff, most of whom are part-time and sessional workers.

### **BOARD OF MANAEGEMENT:**

Audrey Lai	Chairperson
Svetlana Maric	Secretary
Dalila Peredo	Treasurer
Anh Thu Tran	Member
Janet Stevens	Member
Juliana Nakrumah	Member

### **STAFF:**

Manager  
Secretary (part-time) x2  
Cabramatta Project Co-ordinator  
Women's Health Educator  
Cabramatta Administration Assistant  
Group Facilitators: Arabic, Vietnamese, Chinese, Swahili, Middle Eastern  
Seniors, Chinese, Sudanese, Spanish  
Book-keeper  
Child Minder  
Arabic Assyrian Parenting Project (AAPP) Co-ordinator and 3 officers

The service also has a committed group of 22 volunteers. Their prime duty was to assist group facilitators and some general office support. On-the-job training was provided to support the volunteers.

## **VOLUNTEERS:**

Anne Marie Uwizeyimana  
Emini Turkmen  
Tonka Takla  
Jacklin Ibrahim  
Catherine Rothery  
Juliette Kharman  
Jenny Jensen  
Helen Arabzadeh  
Sola Touma  
Mary Hedges  
Alexandra Sesa  
Ilma Valenzuela  
Pascasie Riziki  
Ann Nesbitt  
Tamadhur Malallah  
Yolla Shelala  
Kathy Woods  
Janet Murton

Cathy Alima  
Salwa Aghajan  
Anhe Le  
Y-Hourng Kov  
Nawal Hasan  
Seham Tallal  
Salwa El Dalia  
Nola Younes  
Swlet Saeed  
Wesam Raweel  
Hong Nguyen  
Jacklin Younadem  
Helen Isha  
Fana Abduluaejeed  
Rasha Daniel  
Ean Heng Chhor  
Carole Cole

## **Quality Improvement**

Immigrant Women's Health Service holds annual planning and review days with the board of Management and staff to evaluate its services and programs, review strategic plan and identify gaps in services and clients needs.

Pre and post surveys are conducted with all groups and programs to evaluate the effectiveness of the programs and the impact they had on improving women's health and well-being. These surveys ascertain changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviour.

Funding limitation has made it difficult for the service to undergo accreditation process although we did the initial work towards it and will continue to do so.

## Organisational Details

### **Fairfield Centre**

92 Smart Street, Fairfield 2165

Tel: 9726 4044

Fax: 9726 4928

Operating times: 9am – 5pm,  
Monday – Friday

### **Cabramatta Centre**

McBurney Road, Cabramatta

P.O.Box 330, Cabramatta 2166

Tel: 9726 1016

Fax: 9728 7372

Operating times: 9.00am – 2.30pm,  
Monday - Friday

[iwhs@swsahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:iwhs@swsahs.nsw.gov.au)  
[www.immigrantwomenshealth.org.au](http://www.immigrantwomenshealth.org.au)

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**Funded by NSW Health - Sydney South West Area Health Service**