

History of Service

In February 1990, a group of women's health workers met in Mordialloc to discuss common problems in the delivery of health services to women in the Southern Region. From this meeting the Southern Women's Health Action Group was formed (SWHAG) to focus on how best to address these issues. Broad regional representation was fundamental in developing a women's health service.

SWHAG held a meeting in Hampton, the aim being to gauge support for a regional women's health service and to organise a strategy for its achievement. Workers and consumers across the region attended and the many that could not, sent their best wishes and support. The outcome of the meeting was a definite yes to the idea of a regional Women's Health Service. This was in keeping with the State Government Women's Health Program Strategy in the development of regional women's health services throughout Victoria. However, questions were left unanswered. These included the future structure and operation of a future service in meeting health needs of women.

At that time, the region included the area from Port Melbourne to Wonthaggi, Berwick and down to Portsea. Its geography varied and its population base was large. SWHAG was aware of and sought funding under the National Women's Health Program to undertake a consultation with women and workers in the region. Upon receipt of funding in April 1991, the project commenced. Following broad consultation throughout the region, the findings were presented in the form of a submission for a Women's Health Service. In an atmosphere of celebration, the submission was launched at Springvale in November 1991 and submitted to the then Health Department, Victoria.

Funding was granted early in 1992. SWHAG immediately advertised for a CEO to establish the new service in Frankston as a central point in the region. Some women from SWHAG went on to form the interim steering Council. At the first planning meeting, the organisation came under a new name, Women's Health in the South East (WHISE). WHISE opened in September 1992 and became incorporated in November 1992. The establishment of the Service was due to the hard work, energy and commitment of SWHAG members. Finally, the dreams and goals of so many committed women came to fruition.

In November 2007, the organisation relocated to new premises at Dandenong, close to all the facilities and services that our clients are likely to use. Our client groups have changed clearly with our move – we are seeing many more women from different cultural backgrounds, and we are linking in with a number of community groups that assist women and their families to settle better into Australia.