

Health & Wellbeing for Older Women

**Centre for Women's Health
Mid to Older Women's Health Service**

Ageing Safely Forum

22 to 23 October 2009

Adelaide.

Centre for Women's Health



- Established in 1994 in Campbelltown, South West Sydney.
- Offers a range of holistic services to improve the health and wellbeing of women living in the Macarthur region.
- Funded by NSW Health to provide specialist services to:
 - mid to older women (aged 45 years and over)
 - Aboriginal women
 - women affected by domestic violence
- Works with women to gain the confidence, skills and resources to create positive futures for themselves, their children and their communities.

Services offered at the Centre

- Intake Service
- Aboriginal Women's Health Service
- Mid to Older Women's Health Service
- Domestic Violence Service
- Children's Service
- Well Women's Clinic
- Legal Outreach Service
- Cyber Corner

Mid to Older Women's Health Service



- Holistic primary health care that promotes ageing well in later years.
- Promotes physical, emotional, spiritual and social wellbeing for women in their mid to older years.
- Offers a range of services that –
 - sustain or improve overall health
 - promote independence and community participation
 - optimize quality of life.
- Free, flexible and holistic service – women can access single or multiple services, based on their needs, at any point in time.

Range of Services

We offer

- crisis response & support
- short to longer term counselling
- therapeutic groups
- health & wellbeing workshops
- complementary therapies of naturopathy & massage
- outreach
- advocacy
- information & referral

To address issues

- isolation
- life stage transitions
- ageing well
- anxiety & depression
- menopause
- grief & loss
- violence & abuse
- past trauma

What's working well



Counselling

- work in partnership with women
- we listen to what women say and respond to the needs they identify
- work with women from strengths - based approach, gender - specific service model grounded in women's health principles
- allow women to explore issues at their own pace, enabling them to build trust & confidence over time
- use various therapeutic techniques, grounded in Solution Focused Brief Therapy, creative expressive arts, strengths cards, journaling

What's working well (cont)



Group Work

- promotes physical, emotional, spiritual and social health
- provides opportunities for personal development and social connections with other women
- information, education and interactive learning experiences on healthy behaviours, nutrition & exercise
- engages women to explore issues through creative arts, meditation, reflective conversations
- a safe and supportive space in which women can explore often painful memories
- autonomous mutual support groups – for women to come together to support each other e.g., mature women's group, chronic pain group, W.I.T.C.H.E.S, trivia group

What's working well (cont)

Complementary Therapies

- naturopathy & massage
- builds physical and emotional wellbeing
- workshops – practical & educational
- information on taking care of yourself at home through nutrition, gentle exercise, self massage & meditation.

Outreach

- Wollondilly Women's Wellbeing Group - in semi rural community - ***Mature women who come together for friendship, learning and fun to maintain active bodies, minds and spirit.***
- partnership with Camden Council Library Services
- 3 workshops at Narellan Library, *Age of Adventure, Natural Therapies from your kitchen cupboard and garden, Mandalas & Magic.*

Challenges

- Older women generally seek help with ‘symptoms’ of current or past violence and abuse –
 - stress & exhaustion
 - chronic depression, anxiety and panic attacks
 - eating / sleeping disorders
 - financial – no money for medications, herbal supplements
 - sexual health issues
- Collaborative relationships with GPs & aged care services.
- Complementary therapies not recognized by many GPs as co-contributing to health & wellbeing.
- Our own challenges of space, time & resources.