

**Project Settings:** This project was delivered in the City of Moreland, specifically based in the suburb of Glenroy where large numbers of Nepalese people are settling.

This specific program from July 2016 to June 2017 was funded and supported by Moreland City council community Grant program.

The Uniting Church in Glenroy also supported the program by providing a space to deliver some of the program activities.

### **Be the Best Nepalese women's wellbeing program**

The *Be the Best* women's wellbeing program is the first kind of program that focuses on addressing the health and wellbeing needs of Nepalese women in the City of Moreland.

The observations identified that amongst many Nepalese people settled in the City of Moreland some were well established but many were struggling with settlement including the financial pressures of finding work, education and other cultural issues. In particular Nepalese women were finding hard to maintain their health and wellbeing resulting in increased mental health illness. It was identified that many women were very isolated and thus did not feel empowered and this was impacting on their health and wellbeing. The lack of social support and connection to their local community also meant they were not aware of where they could go for assistance when needed. Further, it was clear that there was no confidence amongst women to seek help and use of services which are readily available in the community where they were living. Lack of social networking and support groups were some of the areas identified for improvement. Hence, *Be the Best* women's wellbeing Program was designed to address some of these social and wellbeing needs of Nepalese women living in Victoria, specifically in the City of Moreland.

***Be the Best*** women's program aimed to promote the mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health and wellbeing of Nepalese women living in the City of Moreland.

The objectives of the program were:

- to form a support group for women to share issues, knowledge, skills and experiences
- To enable women to develop new skills and knowledge to support their health and wellbeing throughout their settlement and beyond
- To explore opportunities to work with other organization to enable women to increase their engagement in social activities.

The program was designed to be inviting, visual, interactive, supportive, and fun and most importantly be a catalyst to improving the health and wellbeing outcomes of the women. The program included various social elements such as yoga, dance, meditation, interactions, excursion, and information sessions. The Program also offered women, one to one mentoring, consultation and coaching, and social networking with other women targeting positive lifestyle behaviours' change to enrich their overall health and wellbeing aiming at helping women to be the best that they can be.

The Program was developed on the basis of being creative, innovative and catalyst to bring desired outcome in women's life. Most importantly a focus on applying social elements that would enable the program outcomes to sustain into the future. Each component of the programs was designed based on the identified and felt needs of the target group. The overall program reached 345 women and men.

The main component of the program included

- 37 women attended 42 weeks of **yoga, 20 weeks of dance and meditation sessions**. Yoga and meditation becomes an ongoing program with the interest of women in the group.
- **Interactive workshop with 80 community members focusing on** sharing information, raising awareness, initiating discussion about family violence. This led to the development of a Family violence advocacy group who could follow up on the issues further in the community.
- **150 women participated in interactive talks focus on** yoga, meditation, and self-care and provided opportunities to practice meditation and yoga.
- Women's only excursion tour to natural hot springs in Mornington Peninsula aiming to promote mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of women.

While implementing the program various stakeholders were engaged to increase the reach of the Program's target group. The stakeholders supported the Program in various ways including providing a venue for the weekly program, offering bus services for excursion, providing free information session and expert support by representative of different organisations.

Though, the program was targeted at Nepalese women, men and women from other culture were also involved in specific activities such as the family violence workshop which was targeted to all community leaders and also the Yoga sessions. Involving men and women from other culture was identified as an important strategy to raise awareness amongst all in the community of the common issues experienced by the women which was impacting not only on their health and wellbeing but for all the Nepalese community.

Very positive feedback and comments were received during and at the completion of the program. The strong theme that has emerged from the reflection and interview were; a) Be the best program really broke the chain of social isolation by connecting with people. b) Learnt new skills on yoga, dance, and meditation. c) Created a common forum for women to come and talk their burning issues in the group and formed an ongoing support group. d) Developed network and opportunity for women to engage in the group. e) Provided opportunity to take some space and time to concentrate on own health and wellbeing

The Program enabled women to engage in weekly exercise activities and these were supported by weekly tips and messages for the women to continue the exercises in their own homes. Some women reported that as a result of doing yoga on a regular basis their back-pain had disappeared. Another woman reported that since taking part in the program she was now no longer feeling depressed because she

feels connected to other people. Different aspects of the program were observed as reducing social isolation with many of the women expressing an eagerness for the weekly get-together.

The Program was a great example of how a community of women can be empowered to work together and take the lead to improve the health and wellbeing outcomes of others in their community. As there was no other projects like this for Nepalese women it is a great example of a community taking leadership to promote health and wellbeing by addressing the identified needs of the community. Hence the program significantly contributed to promote mental, physical and emotional health and wellbeing of Nepalese women by reducing social isolation and enhancing social cohesion; which definitely influenced developing broader networks, and social connectedness that promote multiculturalism.

