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Dandenong Loses a Local Treasure

Wellsprings for Women lost on Saturday 16th of March a very dear member of its staff: Rose Elias 52, who died following months of illness.

Rose is of South Sudanese background having migrated to Australia in 1998. She often mentioned how her family were the first South Sudanese to settle in Dandenong.

Rose met Sr Ann Halpin the founder of Wellsprings for Women, while she was a student of Community Development and undertook her student placement at Wellsprings.

This eventually led to her employment at Wellsprings since 2005.

Rose was instrumental in creating a welcoming, caring and hospitable culture at Wellsprings. Her role evolved over the years as she took on several responsibilities, which included in the last eight years, the coordination of the Home Visitation program, the establishment of the Mentor program and the provision of one-to-one support to Wellsprings' participants.

What stood out about Rose was her innate ability to make people feel welcomed, valued, and loved. She had an unshaken determination to remain positive despite the difficulties that she encountered along the way. Her smile and enthusiasm brightened everyone's day and she was particularly gifted at lifting everyone's mood from grumpiness to joy.

Apart from her work at Wellsprings, Rose was heavily involved with her Sudanese community and especially with MaMa Land, an organisation of South Sudanese women who work together to assist the settlement of South Sudanese families in Australia as well as raise funds to help families back in South Sudan. In her words *"The name MaMa Land represents the love of all people and the connection to the land. The members of Mama Land care for land, and the children who are left behind"*

On the 19th of March, Wellsprings held a Tribute to Rose. Over fifty members of Wellsprings family attended the tribute, shared stories and memories of Rose, spoke passionately about the impact she made in their lives, how she assisted them out of their isolation and to blossom as happy and fulfilled women, connected to the community, striving to achieve their best.

"The Tribute was both a time to mourn Rose's death and celebrate her life and legacy"

"We certainly missed her so much especially at such a difficult time following the New Zealand tragedy, as she would have been the key person our participants would go to for comfort, reassurance and succour". Concluded Dalal Smiley, Wellsprings for Women CEO