



### **Sister Ann Halpin 1939 - 2009**

Ann was born on 15 May 1939 in St. Kilda, the eldest and only girl of six children born to William and Nance Halpin. Ann established her teaching skills and passion for the St. Kilda Football Club early in life, when she helped to bring up her young brothers. Primary schooling took place at St. Colman's in Balaclava; part of her secondary education was completed at Presentation College in Windsor.

At age twenty, Ann was working in a bank; at twenty-one, her strong need to help others through teaching drew her to join the Presentation sisters. Her training as a teacher took her to Our Lady of Lourdes, Armadale and her first position as Principal was at St. Joseph's, Boronia. In 1974, Ann came to St. Mary's, Dandenong, as Principal and became part of the strong commitment the Presentation Sisters have to Dandenong since the first Sisters arrived here to teach in 1912.

After more study, Ann returned to the Dandenong area to help in parish pastoral work. She was thrilled to be once again part of this vibrant, multicultural community. Working with refugees and migrant people, Ann found that the isolation and loneliness caused through language and cultural barriers particularly affected women. She approached her colleagues and the Presentation Sisters vacated their home, a house in Langhorne Street, which then became a gathering place for women and named "Wellsprings".

In 1995, Wellsprings opened on a Friday morning for two hours with ten women attending. In 2000, Wellsprings welcomes up to ninety women every week and is open daily. The program of activities ranges from learning English,

to craft and computer courses. Ann has been the inspiration to hundreds of women and their families in Dandenong. Women who have suffered from domestic violence, single mothers, women who could not read or speak English and women who suffered from low self-esteem have all attended Wellsprings. At sixty, Ann's greatest wish is to continue working to provide practical and compassionate support to these women. It is important that she help to empower these women to live fulfilling lives with their families and their community.