

Attention editors and stakeholders

World-class speakers signing up to 'sow seeds of farmer health'

Media Release:

The roll-call of world-class speakers already signed up for the second National Centre for Farmer Health conference is providing an “exciting foundation” for this key event on the agri-health calendar.

NCFH director Associate Clinical Professor Susan Brumby said with abstracts for the conference closing on March 16 she was looking forward to submissions arriving so the conference program could be finalised.

Professor Brumby says the multi-faceted roles of speakers such as Associate Professor John Edwards, Dr Anthony Hogan, rural consultant Cathy McGowan and nurse practitioner Lisa Schiller ensure participants will be given a detailed grounding in service delivery to the agricultural community.

She says the focus of the conference is to equip people dealing with the health and wellbeing of farmers, their families and their employees with the skills, and even the confidence, to function in parts of the country which do not have the support and services of metropolitan Australia.

“John Edwards has been a toxicologist since the early 1980s, with broad interests in the effects of occupational and environmental chemical exposures in human health,” Sue says.

“Now a world authority in his field, his work has involved investigations of chemicals including agricultural pesticides, solvents, carcinogens, genetically modified foods and even illegal drug laboratories.

“The common theme of his research in all these areas has been how to estimate exposure levels in individuals and how these exposures occur – something which is crucial in farming.

“Dr Anthony Hogan, Director of the National Institute for Rural and Regional Australia, works on social issues impacting on rural Australia including the Basin Plan, drought policy and farmer suicide. He is currently conducting a number of studies on the wellbeing of farmers in the face of climate change, including a study on climate risk and adaptation among 4000 Australian farmers and the social aspects of drought and drying in Australia.

“Cathy McGowan AO is a rural consultant, farmer and academic. Over the past 25 years she has established and managed an international consulting and training company and her expertise lies in gender in business, agriculture and research.

“She has been the team leader for a number of national capacity building and research programs with the horticulture, sugar and dairy industries and has extensive experience in community consultation, program design and management.

“Her experience includes researching effective services for rural communities, such as child care and palliative care and the design and presentation of leadership and change management programs for agricultural industries – which is exactly what our conference is all about. “Cathy is all about hands-on improvement of conditions for people in agriculture.

“Dr Lisa Schiller is currently an Assistant Professor / Nurse Practitioner at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire College of Nursing and Health Sciences in the US.

“Her position involves teaching mostly graduate nurse practitioners but right now she also has a project taking senior undergraduate nursing students to dairy farms for health and safety education. That’s as grass roots as it gets and is injecting farmer health into the university undergraduate curricula, which is just as valuable, particularly for the long term.”

Professor Brumby says with abstracts for the 2012 conference closing soon she is delighted with the quality of people who have already submitted.

She says it is “a demonstration” of the reputation the National Centre for Farming Health itself has and the value world authorities place on the opportunity to get involved in delivering the latest research and progress in farm health.

"As the abstracts come in it will enable us to finalise the agenda for the conference, and building on the success of our inaugural event in 2010 we are expecting a diverse and very relevant program of speakers for September 17-19 at the Hamilton Performing Arts Centre, Hamilton, Victoria," Professor Brumby adds.

“The key now is ensuring abstracts are in front of the committee as soon as possible,” she says.

They will be accepted via the website - www.farmerhealth.org.au -
via email to Felicity.Little@wdhs.net or fax to [+61 3 5551 8267](tel:+61355518267)
until March 30,2012.

Further details are available from Felicity Little on +61 3 5551 8585

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