MEDIA MONITORS

More steering to diesel

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Farm families program gets the thumbs-up

HORTICULTURISTS are being encouraged by their dry-land farming counterparts to register early and attend the next Sustainable Farm Families program at DPI Irymple on May 6 and 7.

Millewa farmer Ron Hards said the two-day program centred around health and well-being and was "bloody good".

"It's about diet, health and stress management," he said.

"Until you get into it, you don't imagine how good this program is.

"We got a lot out of it over two full days with plenty of good information – all the 25 families attending were pleased they'd found the time to go.

"It is a really good first step in managing stress and personal health."

Mr Hards said there were plenty of blockies under stress due to low allow water allocations. They would find the days "a good break and extremely worthwhile".

"It's a matter of making the time – we were at the point of sowing our crops and I'm glad we did,"Mr Hards said.

"Now the grape harvest's over, blockies should also be able to fit it in. "Particularly those who don't go to the doctor often.

"There's about 3000 blockies, so you'd think at least 1000 should be interested.

"Since we had our session at Lake Cullulleraine, a lot more local farmers have said they'd go to another when it's held."

Sustainable Farm Families is an initiative of Western District Health Service at Hamilton, delivered in partnership with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries.

Already more than 700 farmers have participated in the program and 100 per cent of participants recommended it to other farmers and helped shape the program.

Sunraysia Community Health Services and the Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership are delivering the program locally.

SCHS chief executive Craig Stanbridge said the program covers a range of areas including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, women and men's health, stress, depression, farm safety, nutrition and exercise

"All participants will have a health assessment," he said.

Victorian Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said the program was to improve the physical and mental health of farmers and their farm families.

"It's about recognising that for many Victorian farming families, the drought's impact continues to affect their lives," he said.

People wishing to attend the Irymple program should contact Sunraysia Community Health Services on 5022 5444 as soon as possible so pre-registration paperwork and consent forms can be completed.

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