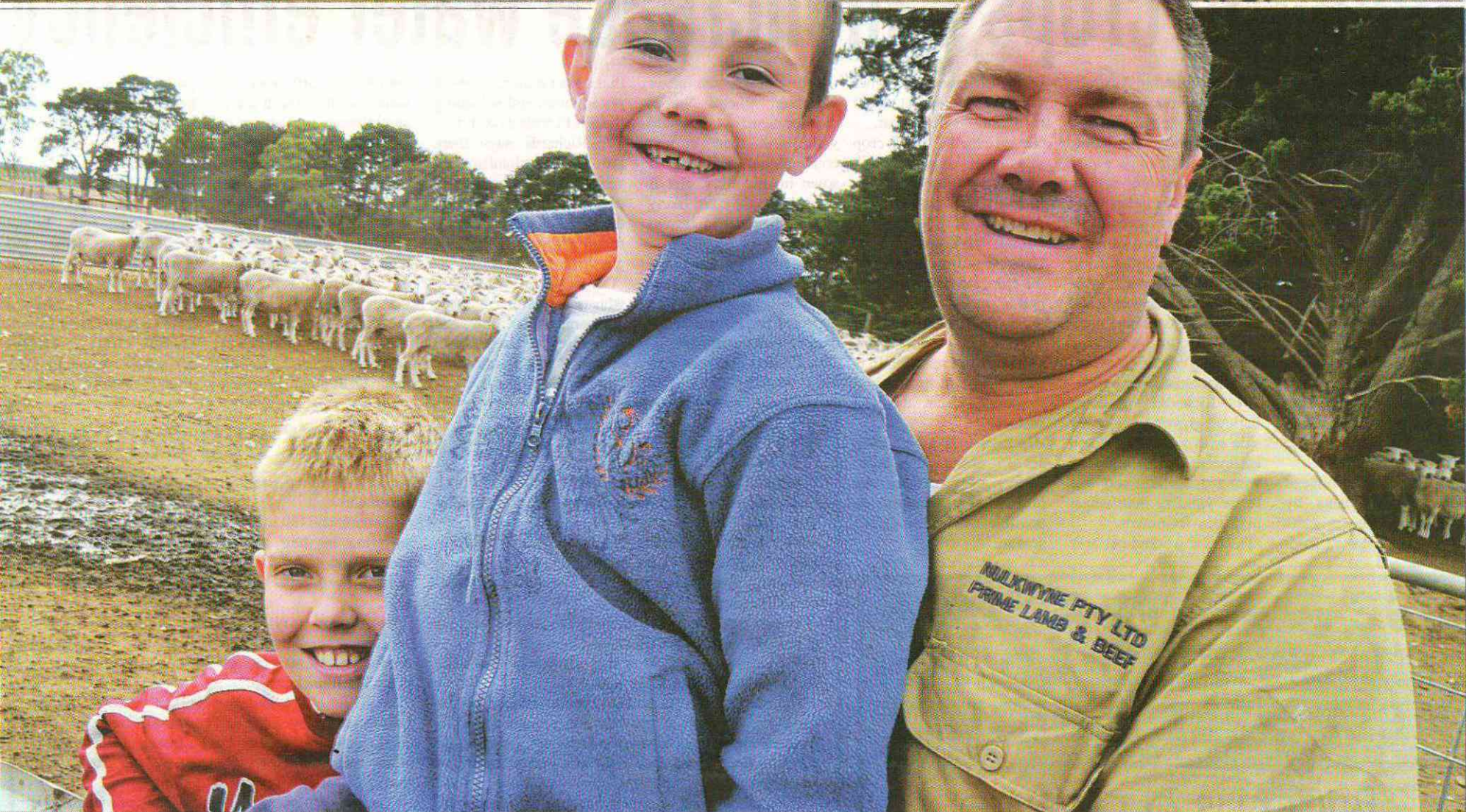


FARMING FOCUS

Spectator Contributors:
Ian Whiting and staff writers



WAYNE Munro with his sons Marcus, 8, and Clancy, 6. Wayne has been a part of the Western District Health Services Sustainable Farm Families program.

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WAYNE'S WORLD IS NOW BALANCED

RYAN REYNOLDS

WAYNE Munro now has balance in his life. For the sheep and cattle farmer near Branxholme managing work and life balance has been hard. That was until he signed up for the Western District Health Service's Sustainable Farm Families program. "I first signed up for the program in 2008," he said. "The Hamilton Pastoral and Agricultural Society were looking for volunteers to join the program so I put my hand up. "I had heard good things from people who had done similar programs." The group has since met in 2009 and will meet again in 2010. "The thing I like about it is that it's not just a once off session and you never hear from them again," he said.

"There are follow ups and it is good to see how everyone is going." Mr Munro said the program had helped him set some personal goals. "The goals are ongoing and always changing," he said. "Some of my goals were to lose weight and get healthier. "I gained (weight) in my first year, but I feel healthier and made some personal changes." He also said that the program allowed him to change his lifestyle. "I have realised that the farm is not the be all and end all," he said. "You need to make time to get away from the farm. "I realised that there needs to be family time as well as time for myself." Mr Munro now spends even more time with his

family. "You have to think about the other side of the coin and not just work so it is great to spend more time with my family," he said. "Now I make sure I attend stuff at the boys school instead of passing it onto someone else or not going." The program also made Mr Munro aware of his and other farmers' physical health. "Farmers are notorious for not looking after themselves," he said. "They send everyone else to the doctor, but they get near death before they go. "The health check up at the program does all the tests so you know where you are in life and what you should change." One aspect of health that stood out for Mr Munro was the mental health of farmers. "It made me understand mental illness better and

how it affects people in the community," he said. "The biggest problem the farming industry has is the isolation. "You don't go into a work situation where you see 20 people in the office. "You go out to work and your only companion is your sheep dog." He said sometimes farmers need another outlet to air their problems. "You don't get the chance to talk to adults when you work," he said. "All you do is talk to your kids and partner which is great, but sometimes you need that independent person to talk to and bounce things off." Mr Munro believes that the reason the program has been so successful was because of the staff. "The organisers and the people that run the course actually care," he said. Continued: PAGE 29

Wayne's world

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"You feel that they are not just there because they are getting paid to.

"They are very passionate about what they do and that is why it is very successful."

He also said the group of farmers in the program was excellent.

"We have a great group of people in the program, everything is on the table," Mr Munro said.

"Everyone can open up because nothing leaves the

room.

"It is the first real time I have gone into a group where there is nothing left behind.

"There is a bit of humour but there is also a lot of serious discussion."

Mr Munro said he would continue on with the program.

"The program has helped me a lot," he said.

"I would encourage anyone who has been thinking about doing a program like this to join."