

# Better health and understanding

**Boosting awareness and understanding of better health, safety and wellbeing in farming communities was the aim of a two-day Sustainable Farm Families workshop held at Bollon last week.**

The program was developed in 2003 by Victorian nurse, now National Centre for Farmer Health director Sue Brumby.

In her work as a nurse, Sue noticed that many farmers or those associated with rural industry were succumbing to chronic, but preventable disease, in particular heart attacks and death due to farming accidents. Long work hours, cost and distance often prevented people from having regular health checks

and engaging in preventative health care.

Funded by the Commonwealth Government and Rural Industry Research Corporation allowed Sue to develop a resource kit and program. The program is based from the Western District Health Service in Hamilton, Victoria, but has been rolled out in Queensland this year. The Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney General have funded workshops at Georgetown, Greenvale, Bollon and later Wondai on July 28 and 29. Bollon Bush Nurse Sharmaine Hurford, who completed the course two years ago, and local shearing contractor Ian Bateman liaised with organisers to bring the

course to Bollon.

The Bollon two day workshop included health assessments of each of the 17 participants including glucose and cholesterol levels, blood pressure, respiratory tests, body mass measurements and eyesight check by health care professionals. Action plans were developed for both health and improving farm safety. Another health assessment will be conducted at a follow-up workshop next year.

A broad range of health topics covered cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, stress, women's and men's health issues, nutrition, physical activity, anxiety and depression and farm safety. It included a visit to the lo-

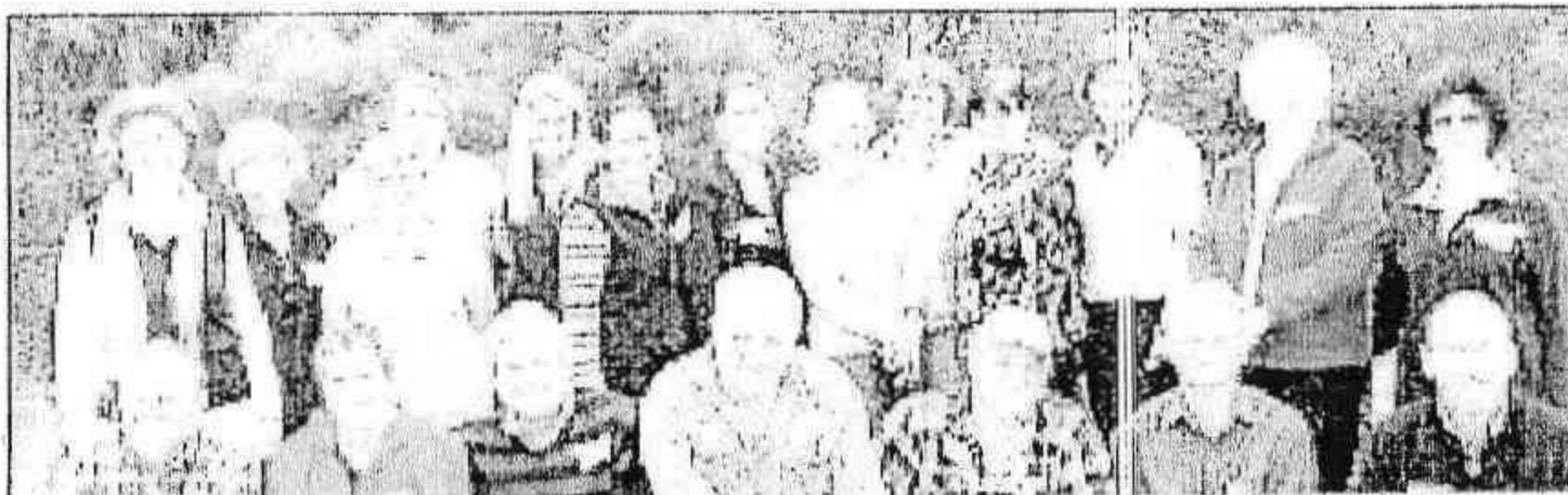
cal workshop to learn about food labelling and nutritional values.

Participant Pam Cameron said the workshop, in particular the physical assessment session made her more aware of what she should be doing for better health.

Bill Speedy said it had "reinvigorated the idea of going to see a doctor".

Self knowledge, empowerment and renewed motivation were other benefits cited by participants.

Jacqui Tinkler said the workshop made her realise the importance of better habits and incorporating her learning into family habits so she could be a good role model for her children.



*Sustainable Farm Families workshop participants at Bollon last Wednesday and Thursday back from left, National Centre for Farmer Health director Sue Brumby, Theresa Sevil, Irene Brierty, Sustainable Farm Families program manager Cate Mercer-Grant, Alex Donoghue, Jenny Sheahan, Jacqui Tinkler, Susan Monagle, Ba Mitchell, Raelene Pears, Tiki North, Pam Cameron, Bollon Bush Nurse Sharmaine Hurford; front, Colin Caton, Mick Nancarrow, Ian Bateman, Charlie Monagle, Geoff Hurford and Andrew Smith.*



*Raelene Pears and Jenny Sheahan during the breast check section of the women's health session.*