

Rural health in focus

HAMILTON

By **ALEXANDRA WEAVER**

INTERNATIONAL experts in rural health and well-being are heading to the south-west for an innovative event.

More than 60 presenters will take part in the inaugural National Centre for Farmer Health (NCFH) conference, to be held in Hamilton between October 11 and 13.

Topics include service delivery, men's health, chronic disease, climate variability, farming families and the challenges of social interaction.

NCFH director Sue Brumby said speakers would include health professionals from the United States, Sweden and the United Kingdom, along with Australian practitioners.

"We have selected speakers we feel will deliver the most relevant and varied messages to conference participants, arming them with the knowledge and positive information they can take back to their farming communities and

workplaces," she said. Farming remains the nation's second most dangerous occupation after mining, with those on the land traditionally reluctant to discuss their health concerns.

The NCFH is also running a photography competition in conjunction with the conference and is seeking images that capture rural life.

Entries can be submitted through the centre's website until September 24. Those keen for a few laughs with their medical education are urged to attend the Hamilton Performing Arts Centre from 7.30pm on October 12, where two comedies by Alan Hopgood will be performed.

Ms Brumby said the plays used humour to explore the effects of diabetes and prostate cancer on individuals and their families.

"Sponsored by DiabetesVic and the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, the plays will be followed by a forum with medical professionals," she said.

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