

# District project boosting farm safety across state

WESTERN District Health Service's award-winning Sustainable Farm Families project is improving the safety of the state's farming properties, according to project leader and WDHS community services director Susan Brumby.

The project recently took out the Statewide Primary and Community Health Network Award for innovation and excellence in Primary Health Care for health promotion.

The award was announced and presented by Daniel Andrews, the Health Minister's Parliamentary Secretary, at a presentation dinner in the Darebin Arts and Entertainment Centre on October 6.

Ms Brumby said feedback from farmers participating in the project indicated they were placing a higher priority on farm safety.

The project's exercises — involving interaction between participants — was leading to them looking at their health in a more holistic sense. "People are being more careful on their farms," she said.

The project is currently looking at the health of broad-acre and dairy farmers, but Ms Brumby said it had been asked to expand to include sugar and cotton producers in New South Wales and Queensland.

Western District Health Service chief executive officer Jim Fletcher said the award was an outstanding achievement and a credit to the team: Susan Brumby, Stuart Willder, Ann Curran, Sue Watt and Larry Neeson from Western District Health Service and Professor John Martin formerly of RMIT Hamilton.

In accepting the state award, Ms Brumby said the major funders (Rural Industries Research Development Corporation and Gardiner Dairy Foundation) together with 17 other organisations and industries and 321 farmer families involved in the project had ensured its success.

The driving force behind was a



At the state awards presentation were, from left, Parliamentary Secretary to the Health Minister Daniel Andrews, Western District Health Service chief executive officer Jim Fletcher, WDHS community services director Susan Brumby, men's health educator Stuart Willder and Primary Healthcare Network chair Gai Wilson.

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recognition that farmers were ageing, working harder and longer and experiencing death, injury, suicides and morbidity rates at a higher level than the Australian population while increasingly relying on family members to provide the extra labour needed to cope.

"Evaluation of the program to date has indicated some significant changes in attitudes and behaviour to personal health and safety which is demonstrated by improvement in cholesterol levels, body mass index and increased knowledge of their own and family health and taking time out to seek

medical assistance from the G.P.'s and primary health care providers as the need arises" she said.

Collaborating partners in the project include RMIT University, Farm Management 500, LandConnect Australia, Victorian Farmers Federation, Australian Women in Agriculture,

Department of Primary Industries, WestVic Dairy, Colac Area Health, Victorian Farmers Federation, United Dairy Farmers, Rural Industries Research Development Corporation, Joint Research Venture Farm Health and Safety, Gardiner Dairy Foundation and Department of Human Services.