



Farming families fit and healthy

STAWELL- District farmers returned to Stawell Regional Health in late February to take part in the second Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) workshop.

SFF is an award winning initiative of Western District Health Service, based in Hamilton, and is delivered in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

The fifteen participants received assessments from local health professionals, and took part in workshops focusing on diabetes, exercise, depression and anxiety, and women and men's health.

The session followed on from a workshop 12 months ago, where participants learnt about cardiovascular disease, cancer, injury, stress and nutrition. Full health assessment were also undertaken during this workshop.

Participant Kevin Jess said he had learnt a lot during the course of the program.

"I really found the diabetes session valuable because it made me think about my health and how that impacts on the farm business," he said.

"The whole workshop was fantastic because the staff there have the time to answer questions and go into detail about each topic. I think everyone should do it!"

Several of the farmers who took part in the program were able to identify issues that require monitoring. Before their health assessments they had been unaware they could be at risk.

Local nurse, Jenny Farrer said it was important for everyone to have regular check-ups, and learn how they can maintain their health.

"In the 12 months between workshops farmers have made progress on making personal changes in their lives to improve their own health and wellbeing," Mrs Farrer said.

"Participants have completed farm safety audits, lost over 30 kilograms, increased cardiovascular exercise and decreased their cholesterol and blood sugar levels and are eating a more balanced diet as a result of attending this program."

Participants learned of the program through the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF).

Mr Jess, a member of the VFF, said it was particularly important for farmers to look after their health in order to run a successful and sustainable farm business.

"There is no point achieving a better bottom line if you're not there to enjoy it," a VFF member said.

● The photographs from the Farming Families workshop that appeared in last Friday's edition were supplied by Stawell Regional Health.