

Health course to address farms' hidden dangers

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FARMERS are "literally working themselves to death" according to National Centre for Farmer Health director Sue Brumby.

She said the health and safety of the Australian farming industry was one of the poorest in the nation.

"We have a sobering record of farmers literally working themselves to death because not only did they not think they needed to take care of their health; not enough of them even understood what was happening," she said.

Farming is second only to mining for the highest industry death toll.

However Ms Brumby said farming's most serious diseases were more insidious, more ingrained and frighteningly more traditional.

"For too long too many farmers have not even acknowledged illness, let alone allow it to slow the hectic work schedule now demanded by 21st century farming," she said.

To help combat this serious problem a five day Agricultural Health and Medicine Course, through Deakin University School of Medicine will be held from February 22 to 26.

"The course has already attracted doctors, nurses, veterinarians, counsellors, agriculturalists and

public health specialists from four states, some of them travelling thousands of kilometres to participate," she said.

"They will work with an outstanding line-up of medical and industry presenters who will provide and insight of the challenges facing farmers, their families, their staff and their industry."

Southern Grampians Mayor Marcus Rentsch said the shire would help to improve farmers' health.

"Southern Grampians is like many regional and rural councils, working at the front line of the issues which will be addressed by the course," he

said.

He said the intensive program would give participants a better understanding of agricultural health issues and help improve the health outcomes of farming men, women, children and agricultural workers.

"This is so critical in areas such as ours, and in similar areas right around the country, which is why our council is more than happy to assist in every way possible," Cr Rentsch said.

The program will be officially launched on February 23 at the Hamilton Art Gallery's Gausson Gallery.



SUE BRUMBY