

# Sustainable Farm Families

On November 5 and 6 2007, station managers, partners and staff from the Tennant/Creek Barkly region returned for the second year of the award winning Sustainable Farm Families program, held at DPIFM Tennant Creek. The first workshop was held in November 2006 and 2007 saw 85 per cent of participants return.

Katherine SFF coordinator Sara Potter joined Susan Brumby, the program coordinator from Western District Health Service, Andrew Smith and Bronwyn Cuthbertson from Victoria to run the one and a half day workshop. They also met with staff and visited the Tennant Creek RFDS General Practice.

The Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) project was brought to the Barkly / Tennant Creek region by the Department of Health and Ageing and Western District Health Service (Hamilton Vic), the initiator of SFF.

As one of the Tennant Creek participants commented *"It raises awareness of health issues and makes you think more about your own health and how your lifestyle is affecting your health."*

The SFF program has provided a wonderful opportunity for pastoral families in the Barkly region to take positive action about their health. Topics covered in the second year include depression, anxiety, physical activity, diabetes and swapped the gender sessions around. Participants were given the opportunity to discuss their health, wellbeing and safety plans, under go another health assessment, and see how they had applied the program to improve their health, well being and safety.

The Federal Government Department of Health and Ageing has supported the program for remote Australia by funding SFF workshops in the Northern Territory, Georgetown (Q) and Mt Surprise (Q), as well as Walgett (NSW) and Esperance (WA).

SFF was developed by farmers, health services, university and farm industry groups as a response to higher illness and premature death rates in farming families.

*"The good health of a pastoralist and pastoralist family is the single most important investment that an agriculture business can have. Understanding its vital role to you, your family and your business is important and makes good sense",* said Ms Susan Brumby Program Coordinator, Western District Health Service.

To date, over 700 farm and pastoral family members have participated in the program, and 100 per cent have said they would recommend undertaking the SFF to other pastoral or farming families. Ms Brumby also commented on the distances and commitment the Barkly people put into attending. The program has just been awarded the inaugural Victorian Health Care Association Initiative in Population Health.

## Contact:

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Participants at the 2007 Tennant Creek Sustainable Farm Families workshop held in November.

