

# rural nurse

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Reaching The  
Rural

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## Sustainable farm families beyond the rural setting

*The Sustainable Farm Families project is seeking expressions of interest from remote nurses in ARIA 4 and 5 to participate in the next exciting phase of this award winning program's development.*

### What is the Sustainable Farm Families project?

The SFF project grew out of awareness that poor farming family health and well-being impacted not only individuals, but their families, farms, communities and health services. In order to address this, two rural nurses linked their knowledge (men's health, women's health and agriculture) and previous experiences (intensive care, education and farming) with various farmer groups, communities and industries who were keen to address farmer health and wellbeing.

Western District Health Service in Hamilton is the lead agency and has worked with 20 different locations in Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. Industries include wool, cotton, grains, and dairy. The program is now working with industry and rural and remote nurses to trial the program



ON SITE AT A LOCAL SUPERMARKET LEARNING THE BENEFITS OF LABEL READING

in remote Australia and is being supported by the Australian government.

### How does the program work?

By working with farmers and industry groups the program has been able to address health inequities (higher morbidity, premature mortality, access to information)

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THE RURAL NURSE





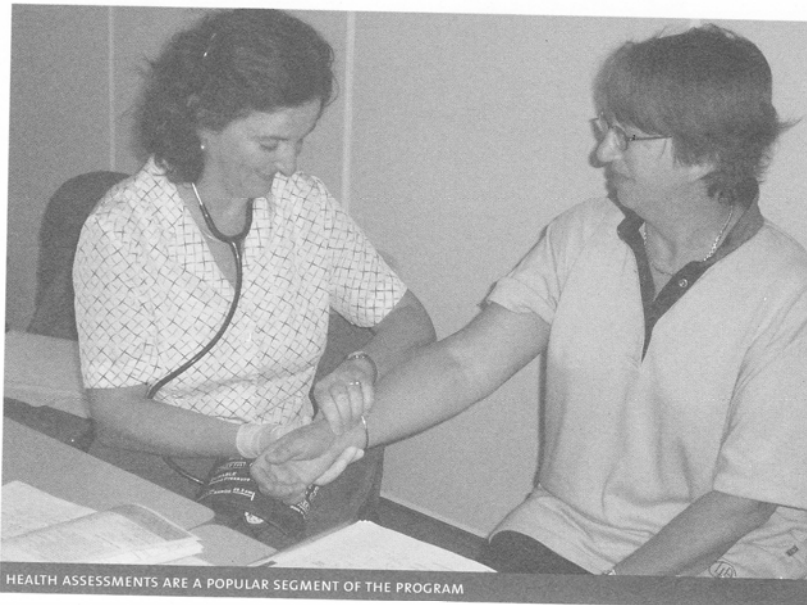
## Sustainable farm families beyond the rural setting

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and empower individual and family members to change. The program has been a great success story and an excellent model of participation and empowerment, with change occurring at individual, couple, family, community and farming industry levels. The human side of the triple bottom line (financial, natural resource management, human resources) was pretty sick and for many reasons has been difficult to change successfully. The challenge of SFF was to recognise the health of the human resource in a farming context as a core component of farming family success. Farmers spend more on nutrition and advice for their cattle, sheep and crops than they do on themselves or their families!!!!

The project through workshops specifically focuses on a number of health areas including the following:

- The state of rural and remote health
- Cardiovascular disease, treatments, incidence and prevention
- Cancer, treatments, incidence and prevention
- Health and safety on the farm and recognition of risks and management principles to reduce such
- Nutrition and diet, label reading
- Gender specific health conditions such as prostate



HEALTH ASSESSMENTS ARE A POPULAR SEGMENT OF THE PROGRAM

cancer, erectile dysfunction, breast and cervical cancer

- Stress and stress management
- Anxiety and Depression
- Diabetes
- Physical Activity

Farmers and families are tracked over two years for changes in attitudes to health behaviours, improved health outcomes and prevention or early treatment of illness.

### What have been the results to date?

Results from the SFF program suggest that a holistic approach to health, wellbeing and safety is a prime motivator for attitudinal and behaviour change, particularly in relation to OH&S issues which have been difficult to embrace

in Australian agriculture. This extension across other agricultural industries and remote communities provides an opportunity to collect data from additional participants over the two years of the project.

### Results show

- Increased knowledge (health, well being, farm safety, diet and nutrition, stress, gender specific) evidenced by pre and post test questionnaire
- Improved baseline health indicators across 7 benchmarks
- Achievement in health and lifestyle issues 100% indicated achievement (data 1)
- Positive evaluations of SFF workshops process (data 2)

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PARTICIPANTS AT BENALLA ENJOY TABLE DISCUSSIONS

- Consumers/farmers linked into local health service
- Built capacity across rural disciplines and industries
- 94% of farmers participating identified areas to improve health, stress and safety
- Strong governance model with farmer representation x 4 on steering committee
- 100% of participating farmers would recommend the program to other farmers

Excellent intersectoral collaboration with over 20 organisations now involved in the SFF projects (health, farmer groups, industry, university, training, government, lobby groups, growers)

The Sustainable Farm Families Project has won numerous awards for innovation in health care, consumer involvement in their own health, research in Australia and additional regional awards.

#### Where will the program run and when will it start?

We are looking for expressions of interest from remote area nurses in ARIA 4 and 5 in NSW, Queensland,

WA and NT that their local industry has a strong agricultural base.

#### The SFF remote program will be commencing with first year workshops in 2006 and 2007 and completed by June 2008.

What are the benefits of being involved for you and your community?

- Rural industries, disciplines and health providers will be working collaboratively to address the health of farming families.
- Leadership opportunities for rural and remote nurses in an innovative project.
- Including farm family health in the context of their daily lives, not only improves farm family health it enhances the productive potential of their farm.
- Increases in health and well-being having a positive influence on reducing depression and poor health and illness such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, injury has been closely linked with an increase in mental illness.

- Early intervention in health problems will lead to less pressure on the rural health infrastructure.
- Long-term health/well being of farming families contributes to industry and community sustainability.
- Further skill development and training for rural and remote nurses will result.

#### How do I get involved?

If you are a nurse based in ARIA 4 or 5 in NSW, Queensland, NT or WA, and have a keen interest in community health, empowerment and health promotion prevention – this program would be for you.

A knowledge of rural issues and farming would be beneficial.

Please send your details and a brief one page outline of your location and community, position, and interest to:

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Should you wish to discuss the program further, please ring Susan Brumby on (03) 55518460 or visit: [www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au/](http://www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au/)

Expressions of Interest will need to be received by 6 April 2006.

