

Sustainable Farm Families Workshop – 15th -16th November

A successful two day health awareness workshop, held in Tennant Creek drew sixteen station managers, wives and staff from the Tennant/Creek Barkly region. The workshop was one of two held in the NT. The Katherine workshop, which attracted 19 participants, was held in the same week

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.

The SFF program has provided a wonderful opportunity for pastoral families in the Barkly region to take positive action about their health. All participants were given a health check and participated in the two full days or workshops. Topics covered included the state of rural health, cardiovascular disease, cancer, farm health and safety, stress, gender specific health issues and a supermarket tour.. All participants were also given the opportunity of a one on one assessment to go through their results, some of the learning and how this could be applied to improve their health, well being and safety.

The Federal Government has supported the pilot program for remote Australia. It has funded SFF workshops in the Northern Territory and workshops at Georgetown (Q) and Mt Surprise (Q) followed with Walgett (NSW) and Esperance (WA) in early 2007. A final round of workshops will be held November 2007.

SFF was developed by farmers, health services, and university and farm industry groups as a response to higher illness and premature death rates in farming families. Ms Brumby the program coordinator from Western District Health Service said *“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.”*

SFF was piloted in broadacre farming families in south eastern Australia. Other agricultural industries recognised its positive impact on farmer health and attitudes to health and health and safety, resulting in SFF for the dairy , sugar and cotton industries.

So far there have been nearly 500 farm and pastoral family members and individuals who have participated in the program, and 100 per cent have said they would recommend SFF to other pastoral or farming families.

Ms Brumby also commented on the distances and commitment the Barkly people put into attending and participating in the program and look forward to returning next year.

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