

Sustainable Farm Family Workshop

A successful Sustainable Farm Family Workshop was held in Walgett and Burren Junction recently. A detailed report appears in this issue, accompanied with photos.



Ian and Sue Butler talking with health educator Aaron Wales from Western District Health Service, Hamilton Victoria.



Left to right: SFF Program Leader Susan Brumby, Health Educators Cheryl Lang and Aaron Wales from Western District Health Service, Hamilton Victoria.

Sustainable Farm Family Workshop Success

Twenty people recently attended the award-winning Sustainable Farm Families one-off pilot project in Walgett and 9 in Burren Junction during the last week of February 2007. Throughout the whole workshop emphasis was placed on how the health of the farmer and the family impacted on the productivity of the farming business.

At the start of the 2 day workshop, participants underwent a physical health check to assess blood sugar levels, cholesterol, body mass index, waist-hip ratios, blood pressure and physical assessment. Following this, active group learning sessions were conducted involving discussions, videos, photos and hands-on exhibits on heart disease, cancer, nutrition, diet, stress, and farm health and safety. The group's then separated into genders to learn about men's and women's health. At Walgett, the groups enjoyed a stroll to the local IGA supermarket where they learnt and practiced to read labels while at Burren Junction, an interactive tour was undertaken and some various food containers provided.

Each participant was provided with a valuable resource manual to use and they were encouraged to share with their families. This is because research has shown that a lot of people learn their health information through their own family networks. Local health representatives also attended the workshop from the Greater Western Area Health Service (Nola Mooney, Walgett) and the Hunter New England Health Service (Nerida Lawrence, and Donnelly Mitchell, Burren Junction) to provide a local point of contact for families.

Participants learnt valuable information including, that rural people die an average 7 years before city people. There are many reasons why this happens including the fact that farmers live where they work, fatigue, injury, chronic complaints, less access, children under four drown on farms than anywhere else in Australia and dust inhaled from sheep and cattle yards, silos etc contain particles (e.g. animal excrement,) which can cause damage when inhaled.

This project which is funded by the Department of Health and Aging, and was brought to the Walgett Shire by the Western District Health Service, Hamilton, Victoria, the initiator of SFF with the support of the Walgett Shire Council, the Greater Western Area Health Service, the Hunter New England Health Service, the Burren Junction RSL Club, Burren Junction CWA, John Anderson, MP and Kate Schwager. The Reaching the Remote project has been working with farmers across remote Australia, including Katherine (NT), Tennant Creek (NT), Esperance (WA), Georgetown (QLD) developing a program which improves farming family health,



Burren Junction Group and Trainers and Facilitator.

which in turn improves the farm's bottom line.

Over the next 12 months participants will identify and work on specific areas to improve their health, well being and safety and get back together again for next years workshop.

Walgett farmers said the course created more awareness of health and mental issues. Another said "it increases your awareness of really "basic" what you should know about health issues, and makes you more conscious of your health".

Nanette Watson of 'Fairfield', Wee Waa said "the graphic video footage and virtual shopping tour were particularly helpful in making my husband sit up and take notice about the dietary recommendations as well as the need to be ever vigilant about farm safety. Being part of a two year programme is an added incentive as we have now committed to several goals to improve our health and we know we will be " followed up" so hopefully that will keep us on track !"

For more details and photos, visit www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au, or phone Jodi McLean, (02) 6828 3335.



Walgett Participant Group and Trainers and Facilitator