

Sustainable conclusion

Farming families in Burren Junction and Walgett completed the second and final year of a Sustainable Farm Families project during the last week of February.

Twenty one families from the two regions completed the workshop which placed an emphasis on how the health of the farmer and family impacts on the productivity of farming businesses.

At the start of the two-day workshop, participants underwent a physical health check to assess blood sugar levels, cholesterol, body mass index, waist-hip ratios, blood pressure, respiratory function and physical assessment.

Participants compared and discussed their results from this year to their previous year's results with nurses. Following this, active group learning sessions were conducted which involved discussions, videos, photos and hands-on exhibits on diabetes, physical activity, mental health and well being including: depression, anxiety, suicide, practical assistance and lifestyle activities.

In contrast to 2007, this year men learnt about women's health and women learnt about men's health.

At the conclusion of the workshop, the groups were presented with results from the project, comparing remote farmers with other dairy, cotton, sugar, broad acre and grain farmers across Australia.

Each participant was provided with a valuable resource manual, pedometer and resistance bands, and they were encouraged to share them with their families. Research has shown that people learn their health information through their own family networks. Local health representative, Donella Mitchell, also attended the workshop from the Hunter New England Health Service to provide a local point of contact for families.

Participants learnt valuable facts, such as rural people die, on average, seven years before their city counterparts.

Reasons suggested for this include; more children drown on farms that anywhere else in Australia and dust inhaled from sheep and cattle yards may contain dangerous farm chemicals and animal excrement particles, which can cause damage when inhaled.



Workshop presenters Sue Brumby (Program Leader, Director Community Services), Aaron Wales, and Cheryl Lang, all from Victoria.

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An identifiable gourmet region

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"Our home grown food and wine producers have won acclaim and countless national awards but are now mounting a co-operative campaign to win the hearts of the elite in Sydney's hospitality industry.

NSW Parliament's head chef, Scott Clark described the region's cuisine offerings as 'distinctly derived from our European origins'.

He added that he gained a richer appreciation for the local food and wine by hearing first-hand the stories behind the produce, like the background stories of nationally awarded companies such as Peel Valley Milk and Bellata Gold.

The Parliamentary Food and Wine Showcase is designed to help local food and wine business people in their fight to capture lucrative, high-end Sydney markets.

According to one event organiser, Ruth Johnstone, the locals are stepping up in professionalism and are working collaboratively and are pro-actively promoting themselves as an identifiable gourmet region.

The Showcase follows on from the NIRDB produced 'Food & Wine - Northern Inland NSW' brochure, which was released late last year and has been declared a huge success by the board.