



# Caring for farmers

Yarrowonga District Health Service and Cobram District Hospital community health nurse Sue Crowther spoke of her experiences in delivering the Sustainable Farm Families Program at a statewide summit on farmer health last week.

"The summit brought together health professionals to develop their skills in mental ill-health, respiratory assessments and prepare for the delivery of the second year of Sustainable Farm Families workshops to 1000 farmers across the state," Ms Crowther said.

Agriculture Minister Joe Helper officially opened the summit in Dunkeld, and said the Victorian Government would invest \$2.18 million over the next four years to enable an additional 500 Victorian farmers to access the successful Sustainable Farm Families Program.

"As part of the Brumby Government's \$205 million Future Farming Strategy launched earlier this year, funding will be used to run workshops with a focus on practical steps to improve the lives of farm families, targeting families in areas undergoing significant change," Mr Helper said.

"The Sustainable Farm Families Program has already worked with almost 1000 farmers across Victoria, and as a result of its success, further workshops will be rolled out over the next four years.

"The Brumby Government is



**Health focus:** Drought Service co-ordination project worker Sue Crowther at the Dunkeld Summit with Agriculture Minister Joe Helper.

taking action to ensure farmers are in good health and able to run their farm businesses more effectively.

"The program is a fantastic opportunity for farmers to understand their own health risks, how to manage them and integrate them into farming life, which can be difficult given the pressures they face.

"There were some cases where participants had malignant skin cancers identified at the workshops, which could have otherwise gone unchecked," he said.

Sustainable Farm Families' workshops cover a range of health topics including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, stress, depression, anxiety, nutrition and exercise.

The program is an award winning initiative of Western District Health Service delivered in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and in collaboration with both Yarrowonga and Cobram District Health Services.

For more information phone the Western District Health Service on 5551 8450.