



**Participants . . .** Taranjit Singh, Lakhbir Khakh, Rupinder Khakh, Narinder Sangha and Chain Sangha attended the farmer health seminar.

# Health put first

By Rebecca Tampion

Horticulturalists from the Greater Shepparton area were urged to take as much care for their health as they do for their businesses at a two-day health seminar in Shepparton last week.

Thirteen horticulturalists took part in one of Sustainable Farm Families' farmer health seminars where health, wellbeing and safety were addressed.

Beginning in 2003, Sustainable Farm Families was initiated by Susan Brumby and Stuart Willder from the Western District Health Service, based in Hamilton, and is delivered in Victoria in partnership with DPI.

Ms Brumby said the motivation behind the program's inception was to rectify the disparity between metropolitan and rural health.

"The motivation was to give better access to education, infor-

mation and skills and knowledge," Ms Brumby said.

She said the program aimed to improve the triple bottom line which consisted of financial, natural and human resources, particularly the human aspect which was often neglected.

Ms Brumby said there were various health disparities between metropolitan and rural people including shortened life expectancy and more illnesses among farming populations.

Topics covered at the seminar included nutrition, cardiovascular disease, cancer, mental health, stress as well as individual gender health sessions.

Health assessments were also carried out with each of the participants.

Those who attended last week's seminar will be required to attend a follow-up in about 12 months' time so their progress can be monitored.

Ms Brumby said the seminars were being conducted across the state with about 1000 farmers to take part in the program.

Shepparton East orchardist Taranjit Singh attended the seminar last week in Shepparton and said the program helped him realise the importance of individual health and wellbeing.

"You don't think about your health until something happens to you," Mr Singh said.

"I have learnt I need to have a regular health program and exercise, be more careful with my diet and spend more time with my family.

"You focus on how you can make a better business . . . but health comes first from now on."

A Sustainable Farm Families seminar will be held in Nathalia on December 6 and 7.

Anyone interested should phone Cindy Rainbow on 5866 9444.

[rebecca.tampion@sheppnews.com.au](mailto:rebecca.tampion@sheppnews.com.au)