

SFF gains \$2.9 million for two years

By CATHY HARBISON

SUSTAINABLE Farm Families project has \$2.9 million in funding to continue its work over the next two years.

Minister for Agriculture, Joe Helper, announced the funding in Hamilton this week for the project which was devised by Western District Health Services director of community services, Sue Brumby, Professor John Martin of Latrobe University and Stuart Wilder.

The project was trialled by 400 farming families from 2004 – 2007, addressing their health and safety needs. The additional money has been granted so the project can be offered to another 1000 drought-affected farmers across 50 locations throughout Victoria.

The project's motto is 'No point in a triple bottom line if you're not there to enjoy it'.

The SFF program covers a range of areas including coping with stress and depression, farm safety, cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, women's and men's health, nutrition and exercise.

The project trials showed significant improvements in health indicators including blood cholesterol, blood pressure and glucose levels with all participants recommending the program to other farmers.

Another benefit to participants was the belief that they were coping better with drought-related stress than they had before doing the program.

"Rural health isn't all that good so joining the program has got to help. I got out of the program better health awareness and how to monitor my own health," one of the original participants, Balmoral farmer, Sabrina Watt, said.

"I found it great and I'm still doing the health monitoring."

Mr Helper said the SFF program was an intuitively logical approach to farmers' wellbeing and health and he commended Ms Brumby and her team for their vision and hard work in making the project happen.

"The program works and I am pleased to be funding the SFF project for another two years as we recover from drought," Mr Helper said.

WDHS chief executive, Jim Fletcher, said the funding was a grand opportunity to roll the program out and focus on the health of farming families.

"The program has now been delivered in every state in Australia, except Tasmania, and we already have 50 people trained to deliver the program, including 30 in Victoria.

"The new funding will allow us to train an additional 25 people," Mr Fletcher said.



SUE Brumby (left) with Minister for Agriculture, Joe Helper and WDHS chief executive, Jim Fletcher, at the announcement of an additional \$2.9 million to offer the Sustainable Farm Families project to drought-affected families across Victoria.

070731cr06