

2008 SFF Summit

THE Sustainable Farm Families project in Victoria geared up to deliver its second year of workshops to 1000 farming families, at the recent summit hosted by Western District Health Service.

The 2008 Sustainable Farm Families Summit in Dunkeld, brought together health and agricultural professionals involved with SFF from across Victoria, to prepare them with key information and skills for year two of the Department of Primary Industries-funded project.

The aim of the summit was to update the skills of SFF program facilitators in mental ill-health, respiratory assessments and facilitation.

Health professionals from rural health services across Victoria have been supported and trained over the past 12 months by WDHS community health staff to deliver the SFF program.

Some health professionals from partnering health agencies Kerang District Health Service, West Gippsland HealthCare Group and Delatite Community Health Service also outlined their local experience in delivering the SFF program in their communities at the summit.

The importance of the summit and the SFF program to Victoria's farming community was evident as Minister for Agriculture Joe Helper officially launched the summit.

Speakers included Professor Joe Graffam, Deakin University and Neil Barr, Department of Primary Industries.

Professor Graffam provided tips for dealing with mental ill-health and gave an overview on the link between mental health and the burden of disease.

Neil Barr spoke on the factors shaping the future of the agricultural industry and landscape including the change in farming productivity, demographics and social values.

WDHS board member Hugh Macdonald who attended the summit launch, said SFF was a trail-blazer for the health industry, providing a focus on farmer health at a critical time for agriculture.

"The summit brought health professionals from across Victoria together, and gave them the important opportunity to share their experiences and swap ideas, to ensure the ongoing success of the purpose of SFF - to improve overall health in the farming sector," Mr Macdonald said.

SFF program manager, Cate Mercer-Grant said the summit was important for developing the skills and knowledge of the health professionals in delivering the program.

"In addition, the summit demonstrated that building partnerships in the communities in which we run SFF programs is also incredibly important.

"The summit demonstrated this with the Dunkeld primary school, bowling club and local businesses contributing to the event through accommodation, entertainment and catering," she said