



Sustainability key priority for locals



HELPING FAMILIES: Olivia Johnstone and AnnMaree Christian of Beechworth Community Health Service and Stu Willder from Western District Health Service prepare to deliver the Sustainable Farm Families program.

Helping hand for farming families

THE Beechworth Health Service (BHS) has recently been successful in attracting funding through the Western District Health Service (WDHS) and the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) to run the Sustainable Farm Families Program in the region.

Health professionals Olivia Johnstone and AnnMaree Christian recently attended training in Hamilton, to become skilled at, and increase their own knowledge in, deliv-

living the program.

The training will enable them to deliver the program for the Beechworth and surrounds, and Ovens Valley farm families.

"The training program was beneficial as it made the connection between farm family health and the farm business, and was highly relevant to farm family needs," Mrs Johnstone said.

"The program also integrated with the health promotion goals of Beechworth Health Service."

The Sustainable Farm Families

program is an award winning initiative of Western District Health Service at Hamilton.

The program addresses the health, well-being and safety issues facing farm families through health awareness and education workshops.

Farmers are responsible for the continuing success of the program by helping to shape the framework, therefore it is highly relevant to farm family needs.

More than 1000 farmers nationally have participated in the

program and it is vital to them to be able to access up to date and accurate health, well-being and safety information that recognises the complexity of a farm business.

The Sustainable Farm Families program will be running over two days on May 20 and 21 at La Trobe University in Beechworth.

For further information please contact David Kidd at Beechworth Health Service on 5728 0200.

By PHILIP NOLAN

BEECHWORTH residents have embraced the need for sustainability change at a local level.

A standing-room only public meeting last night enthusiastically backed a grass-roots push to change the way the town tackles climate change issues.

A broad cross-section of local residents, numbering over 90, looked at a range of ways in which Beechworth can beef up its sustainability output.

This will include transport and car pooling, bulk buying of power, regular home audits and upskilling of tradespeople to embrace new environment-conscious innovations.

The meeting also endorsed moves to formalise the setting up of a new Beechworth Sustainability Group along similar lines to others operating in various parts of the state.

Joan Sims, a committee member of the Kerferd Oration committee, which has been one of several key players in setting up the public meeting, said the response last night had been "over-whelming".

"It was wonderful to see. People were very happy to get involved and very optimistic that we can make changes ourselves."

"Barney Foran, an environmental scientist who lives locally, chaired the meeting and also spoke at length, and he did a great job going through all of the issues.

"We were also very

pleased to see the mayor, Vic Issell, along as well, lending his support," she said.

The meeting was told that each Indigo Shire resident emitted around 20 tonnes of greenhouse gas per year, and that this was about the mid-range level at a national level.

"We will certainly be focusing on reducing that amount on an individual level," Mrs Sims said.

Those present agreed that there was a greater need to share sustainable use ideas among the community, and also to share knowledge in relation to new products coming onto the market.

There will be a stronger focus on attracting sustainable industries to the shire, as well as an investigation of transport, with an emphasis on a more formal approach to car pooling among local residents working in Wangaratta and Wodonga.

A timetable has also been put in place by the new group, with the first aim being a public meeting to be held in May to be addressed by Mike Hill, the chairman of the Victorian Local Sustainability Advisory Committee.

Home and house audits will be the focus in June, while in July, the annual Kerferd Oration will be delivered by environmental and climate change leader, Tim Flannery.

A round table meeting to look at further sustainability measures has also been scheduled for August.