Farming families get healthy lesson

FARMERS from Northampton and surrounding areas attended a Sustainable Farm Families workshop last month as part of an initiative to help improve the health of local farmers and their families.

The Sustainable Farm Families program aims to develop the knowledge of farmers regarding their own health, with a focus on practical steps that can be taken to improve the lives of farm families and the impact this improvement can deliver to their businesses.

The workshop was the first of a series to be hosted in the Mid West by the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health.

Participant Ian Harrison was pleased he took part.

"The workshops were excellent and over the two days I certainly learnt a lot about my health," he said.

"We all received a free health assessment and the workshop sessions were interactive, and I think everyone enjoyed themselves."

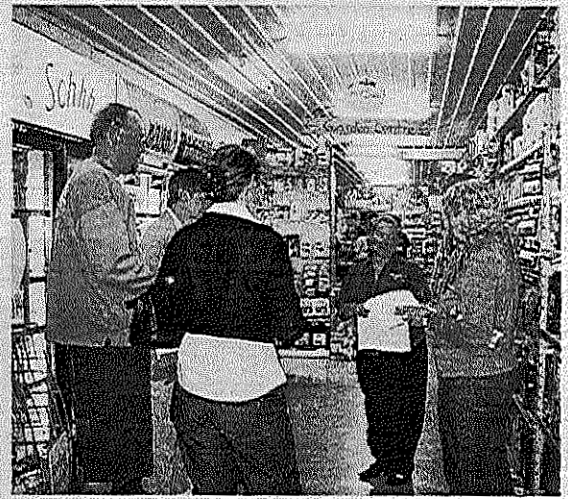
Jacki Ward, a registered nurse and senior project officer with the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health, said the program covered a range of areas, including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, women's and men's health, stress, depression, farm safety, nutrition and exercise.

Farmers who attended came from Yuna, Binnu, Nabawa and Northampton, and became aware of the opportunity through the Northampton Health Centre. Sustainable Farm Families is an award-winning initiative of Western District Health Service, based in Hamilton, Victoria, in partnership with the Department of Health and Ageing, and is delivered locally by the Combined Universities Centre for Rural Health.

Farmers who have completed the program in the past have reported enhanced overall health, including everything from better eating to improved farm safety.

Some also found they were able to make better decisions because they had a new perspective on how important their health and their families were in their lives.

All of the participants will return to complete another two-day workshop in 12 months' time, again receiving a health assessment so they can track their health indicators over time.



Sustainable Farm Families participants go on a tour of a supermarket to learn about healthy choices.