

Wake-up call for farmers

THE BELLARINE farming community descended on Portarlington last week to receive the Sustainable Farm Families message.

The workshop was part of a statewide initiative to help improve the health, wellbeing and safety of farmers and their families.

Participants not only heard the message,

they also received a health assessment with health professionals and then participated in workshops on cardiovascular disease, diabetes, farm workplace related disease and injury, stress and nutrition.

National Centre for Farmer Health director, Sue Brumby, says several of the tests showed up

cases of significant risk factors for diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease and arthritis.

Brumby said without taking part in the workshop, these warning signs may have gone undetected until too late.

"And that is exactly what Sustainable Farm Families is all about – getting the health message across to one of our most at-risk communities," Brumby said.

"Results from 963 farmers who participated in workshops last year revealed 73 per cent of men and 61 per cent of women were classified as overweight or obese, instantly putting them into a high risk category for cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and osteoarthritis.

"Just over one-third of participants were also identified as having high blood pressure."

Victorian Farmers Federation Bellarine branch president, Graeme Brown, said the VFF is a major supporter of Sustainable Farm Families but he did not expect the workshop message to deliver such a personal message.

"The workshops were excellent and I certainly learned about my own risk factors for major diseases and the impact of injury and accidents on my farm business," he said.

"We all received a health assessment and the workshop sessions were interactive, and everyone enjoyed themselves. It is one of the best events I have attended."

For more information, contact the Western District Health Service on 5551 8508 or visit www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au