



Extra health assessments from state commitment

An additional 500 farmers will get access to free health assessments and workshops as part of a Brumby Government commitment to farmer health.

Officially opening the Sustainable Farm Families Summit at Dunkeld recently, Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said the Brumby Government would invest \$2.18 million over the next four years to ensure the highly successful program continued.

"As part of the Brumby Government's \$205 million Future Farming Strategy launched earlier this year, funding will be used to run workshops with a focus on practical steps to improve the lives of farm families, targeting families in areas undergoing significant change," Mr Helper said.

"The Sustainable Farm Families program has already worked with almost 1000 farmers across Victoria and as a result of its success, further workshops will be rolled out over the next four years.

"The Brumby Government is taking action to ensure farmers are in good health and able to run their farm businesses more effectively.

"The Sustainable Farm Families program is a fantastic opportunity for farmers to understand their own health risks, how to manage them and integrate them into farming life, which can be difficult given the pressures they face.

"And this program comes on top of our commitment earlier this year for a \$2.4 million National Centre for Farmer Health to be based in Hamilton."

Results from farmers who participated in previous workshops 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. High-risk participants such as these were referred for follow up with appropriate health professionals.

Mr Helper said prevention was better than the cure so the Sustainable Farm Families program focused on participants being able to walk away from the program with a greater understanding of how to prevent disease and injury, and the motivation to take action.

"There were some cases where participants had malignant skin cancers identified at the workshops, which could have otherwise gone unchecked," he said.

Sustainable Farm Families' workshops cover a range of health topics including cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, stress, depression, anxiety, nutrition and exercise.

The program is an award winning initiative of Western District Health Service delivered in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI).

Farming industry and community groups are encouraged to contact DPI on 136 186 if they would like to attend the program. ✉