

## **Western District Health Service assists Dairy Conference provide snapshot of health status**

The Victorian Dairy Conference is one of the biggest events on the Dairy Industry calendar with a focus on addressing the issues that dairy farmers are facing now and in the future. The theme of this years conference was on addressing changing times with Plug In, Charge Up and Power On.

An exciting aspect of this years conference was the provision of health assessments for the delegates held on the second day. Delegates were assessed by a team of health professionals from Western District Health Service, South West Health Care, Otway Division of General Practice, National Centre for Farmer Health and Monash University Rural Clinical School. Aply assisting the health professionals was a collaborative team of over 18 people from industry and health services including Department of Primary Industries and major dairy companies.

101 Dairy farmers and associated industry personnel participated in the Conference health assessments in Warrnambool with 9999 pieces of information entered by a team of four data inputters to provide a snapshot of health status back to the participants.

National Centre for Farmer Health Director Sue Brumby said *'that 38% of the 101 farmers and associated industry workers who took the health check indicated their health had interfered with their daily life in the past 4 weeks. Two thirds of the 64 males and 37 women that had checkups were overweight or obese and 42 % of males had elevated blood pressure.'*

Of the 90% that reported drinking alcohol, 63% indicated they drank at above the 2001 National Health and Medical Research Council recommended guidelines levels at least monthly. However, Ms Brumby noted that these guidelines have just recently reviewed and now advise to limit regular drinking to just two standard drinks per day - and no more than four on any one occasion in order to reduce the risk of dying from alcohol-related causes.

*'The good news is that only 4.4% of the participants smoked and it is never too late for people to improve their health with regular physical activity, a healthy diet and enjoying alcohol at safe levels.'* Ms Brumby commented.

*'The health assessments were a fabulous collaborative effort and much appreciation is extended to the organisations who helped make this great effort happen.'* she said.

The National Centre for Farmer Health is a partnership between Western District Health Service and Deakin University. For more information on this program, including how farmers can register interest please visit the website at [www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au](http://www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au).