

NEWS

Mothers avoiding vaccines

BY MEG POWELL

"HUNDREDS" of young women in the North-West are putting themselves and their unborn children in danger by steering clear of COVID vaccines, a Burnie obstetrician-gynaecologist has warned.

Dr Kim Dobromilsky is a leading doctor at the North West Private Hospital, where a large majority of the Coast's babies are born.

She said she had noticed hundreds of women, particularly public patients, choosing not to get vaccinated against COVID-19 due to fears around the way it might affect their own fertility or the safety of their unborn babies.

"My biggest concern has been women who are avoid-

ing the vaccine when they're having fertility treatment, which was a big surprise," she said.

"I've even had women whose partners don't want to get vaccinated because of the effect on sperm.

"But there's no vaccine out there that has an effect on fertility, not even the COVID vaccines."

Dr Dobromilsky said she understood why many pregnant women were worried.

"That's a natural and normal thing," she said.

"I try and talk to them about their concerns and gently work through it. We don't have any long term data, but there's been a lot of research - the vaccines have been used in hundreds of thousands of pregnant wom-

an now.

"What the data is showing is just how dangerous it is to get COVID while pregnant with no vaccine. We have to weigh up the risks and benefits."

Among those who are feeling anxious about the effects of vaccines is a young woman who requested not to be named.

She said she was nearly four months into her pregnancy, and had not yet been vaccinated against COVID.

She said a combination of "persuasive parents" telling her not to get vaccinated, a lack of knowledge, and fears for her unborn child were making her hesitant.

"I just don't know enough about it," she admitted.

"It's not because I think



BELOVED: Dr Kim Dobromilsky has delivered hundreds of babies, and understands the worry women feel around protecting their children. **Picture: File**

it's a government conspiracy or anything. I need to do more research.

"If it were just me I'd probably just bite the bullet and get it ... But it's not purely for me, the baby is obviously a lot more vulnerable than

I am."

Dr Dobromilsky said there was plenty of research out there for mothers to look at.

"The side effects are no different whether you're pregnant or not pregnant," she reassured.

She said about 90 per cent of her private patients were now vaccinated after seeing a "huge uptake" when the borders opened.

"Most of my pregnant ladies are not anti-vax at all, they're sensible, intelligent ladies who are trying to do the right thing," she said.

"But the rate among public patients is much lower. I think access is also a problem."

Dr Dobromilsky said she had been lobbying the state government to allow her to administer vaccines after women had given birth, as many were more willing to receive a dose postpartum.

A Health Department spokesperson said they had unsuccessfully tried to work with Dr Dobromilsky.



THE SEED OF AN IDEA: Enable Ag founder Ram Savana outside his office at Launceston's Enterprise centre. **Picture: Joshua Peach**

Farmers' coach gathers awards attention

BY JOSHUA PEACH

A NOMINATION for a 2022 Business Excellence Award earlier this week marks the second award nomination in as many months for a Launceston start-up fusing life-coaching with the state's agricultural industry.

The start-up's founder Ram Savana said when he launched Enable Ag in 2018 he wanted to help farmers take control of their operations and their lives.

After completing his Masters in biotechnology and working in the medical device field on the mainland, Mr Savana and his wife moved to Launceston, where he quickly discovered he needed to make a career shift.

"Tasmania doesn't really have a medical device sector, but it has a lot of agriculture," he said. Mr Savana is no stranger to the sector, however, growing up in a farming family

himself back in India.

"My parents have a mango and lemon farm and when we were growing up they were always busy working seven days a week. I wanted to develop something that could help them back in India," he said.

Taking a look around the industry in Tasmania, Mr Savana noticed a similar situation.

Despite running more technologically advanced operations, farmers in the region were still working long-hours just to keep the day-to-day running of farms on track - that's where Enable Ag comes in.

"We help the farmers by developing systems that will let them work on their business, rather than working in their business," he said.

Mr Savana cautioned that in many cases, his "systems" weren't hi-tech endeavors, but instead just time-saving, repeatable ap-

proaches to the everyday tasks that face farmers each day.

"For lots of farmers, they don't know what they don't know. We want to help them find the problems they can't see and then help develop solutions," he said.

Enable Ag follows years of Mr Savana's own research into the field, which he undertook by getting his hands dirty, working as a farmhand in the region to gauge the needs and struggles of the farmers he would one day help.

"I was riding out to work on farms on a motorbike in the middle of winter. People thought I was crazy," he said.

That extra time has paid off, with an extensive list of testimonials from farmers now backing him and two potential awards ahead, Enable Ag is proving itself a successful homegrown start-up.

Hillcrest funds caught in legal issues

BY MEG POWELL

MORE than \$1 million that was publicly raised to support affected families in the wake of the Hillcrest tragedy last year has become caught up in "complex" legal issues.

So complex, in fact, that it seems the money has not yet rolled over into a public fund established specifically to handle those donations.

State Recovery Adviser Craig Limkin said there were "outstanding issues" that needed to be resolved in regards to the original amount raised on crowdfunding platform GoFundMe.

"This process is legally complex and not straight forward," he said.

"We have seen recently in other states how difficult it can be for public donations to reach the people they were raised for.

"It is for this reason that the government has stepped in to support the distribution of the donations."

It follows recent news that the funds were yet to be distributed.

Mr Limkin said the families would not need to wait for the donations to come through to receive support, as the state government had been making sure they were provided for.

Devonport mayor Annette Rockliff said she understood the community's concern that the money hadn't yet been distributed.

"It will, and this is not negotiable," she said, firmly.

"The money was always intended for those families and that's exactly where it will go.

"(The) council will continue to take direction from the state government once those funds are rolled over.

"The fund's Distribution Committee, which I am a member of, will meet and make sure those families receive their share of the initial donations received."

She said the total amount raised now stood close to \$2 million, including \$1.42 million from GoFundMe.

"This means that \$459,580 has been raised with donations continuing to flow in steadily from many organisations and business that want to help in some way," she said.

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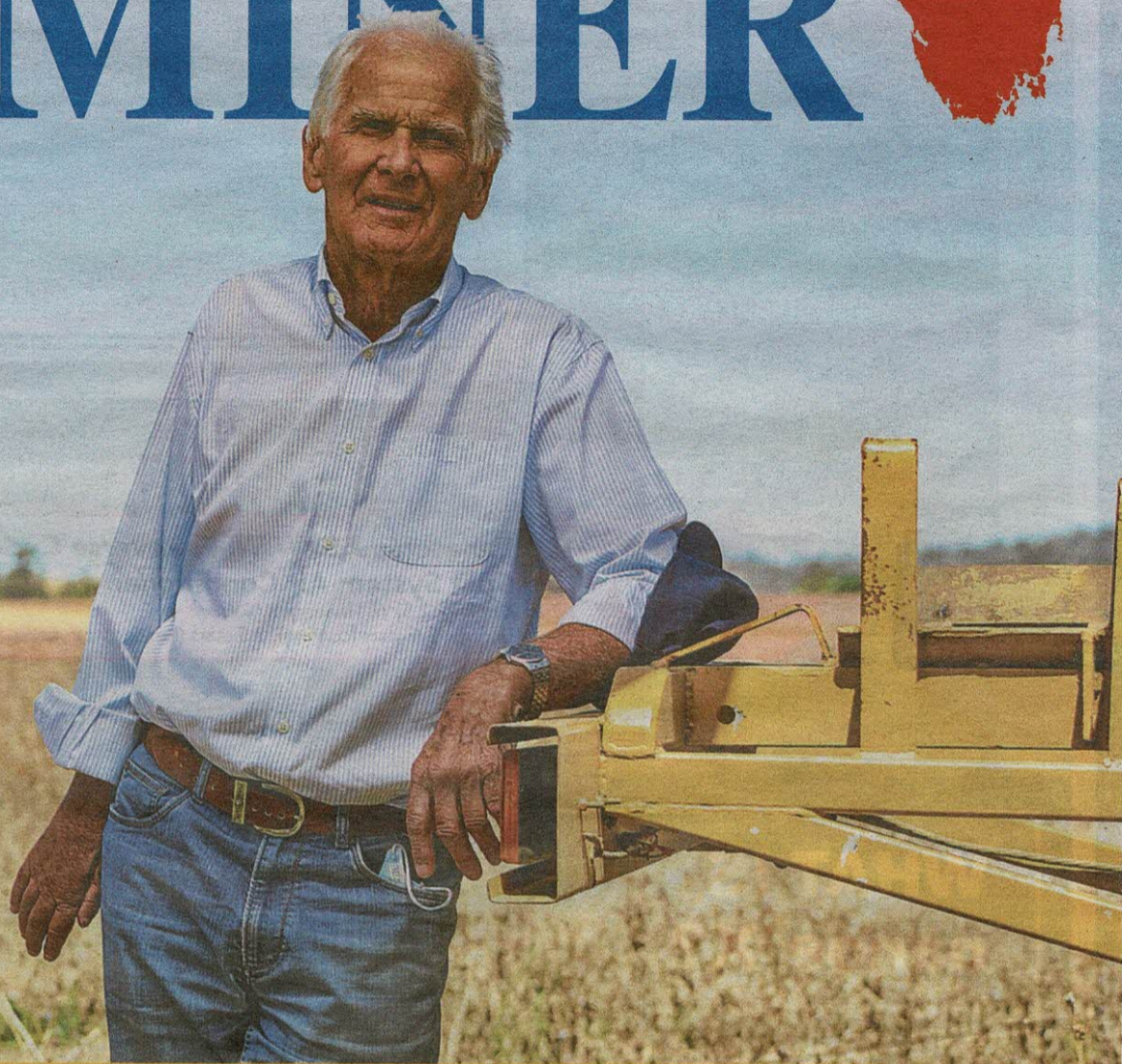


\$2.50
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STANDING TALL

The recent bout of hot weather will have poppy growers around the state smiling as the harvest gets under way, but the uncertainty facing the industry over the last few years remains in place. Almost two years on, the pandemic is continuing to combine with a protracted rebalancing in global demand to hold down prices for one of the state's most widely-grown and widely-misunderstood crops.

JOSHUA PEACH reports, Page 17



Picture: CAMERON TOWNS

LOST IT ALL

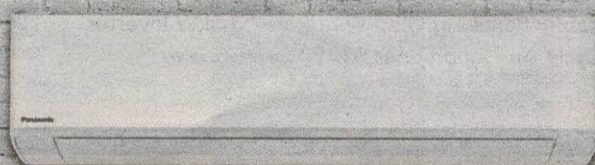
A young family escaped with their lives, but lost everything they owned when a fire ripped through their Kelso home. Emily Bakes, her husband and three young children were inside the house when the fire took hold on Wednesday night, but managed to make it outside before the property was destroyed by what firefighters have determined to be an accidental blaze.

DANA ANDERSON reports, Page 2

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