

# Focus turns to diabetes

By TALIA PATTISON

AN INFORMATION session held as part of Diabetes Awareness Week has provided a rare insight into the history of the disease.

The Leeton Diabetes Support Group hosted the session with guest speaker Sonja Birch presenting on the day.

Ms Birch is a clinical nurse at the Junee Correctional Centre and discussed the history of diabetes through the ages.

Group convenor Lorna Swaffield said many interesting facts were raised throughout the presentation.

"It was very informative ... she was a speaker-and-a-half," she said.

"Diabetes has been a disease that has been around since the first century and Sonja spoke about how Greek physicians



**GUEST speaker Sonja Birch.**

used to employ people to conduct urine tasting because apparently that was the only way then that you could tell a person had diabetes because

of the sweetness in their urine. "It doesn't sound nice, but we have definitely advanced from there."

Ms Birch also spoke about the discovery of insulin and how it aids diabetics and why it is important for people with the disease to ensure they are taking proper care of themselves.

The information session raised money for research into the growing incidence of gestational diabetes in pregnancy.

Mrs Swaffield said it was important to continue to raise awareness of the illness.

"We can only try and make people aware," she said.

"All we can do is bring the issue to the fore because the statistics are frightening.

"The rate of diabetes is continually growing here in our area."