

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

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POSITION: Journalist specialising in health and fitness

ORGANISATION: Freelance - but have been editor of two national magazines

SUBMISSION1: Obesity

There are two major factors to consider - diet and exercise.

Overweight, unfit people won't exercise without support, both professional and social. A study by the Australian Psychological Society found that although 73 per cent of people said they had tried to increase their physical activity more than half gave up within six months.

Similarly, an American study that looked at why so many people join health clubs but don't keep up a regime concluded that it's because of dissatisfaction with staff, inaccessible and unresponsive management, unclean facilities and run-down equipment. Women in particular complained that there was a total failure to engage, energise or motivate the member and left having failed to form a relationship with one person in the gym.

To get fit and keep weight off, the American College of Sports Medicine recommends a minimum of one hour's exercise a day. That needs to be a mix of resistance training and cardio vascular training. Few women, in particular, utilise the level of resistance needed to build muscle, raise metabolism, build bone density and stay strong.

You need to:

- Open local authority gyms that can offer reduced rate membership (as in the UK)
- Encourage local authorities to set up Park Horses - ie outdoor gyms - (as in China)
- Stop local authorities (such as Manly) charging personal trainers for use of council land if they have groups of more than ten people.
- Give people tax rebates on sports clubs and gym membership.
- Give gyms some incentive to keep new members coming and training - set up a website that gives them stars for member motivation, encouraging and supporting beginners, offering training buddy systems, or simply offering kindness and understanding to people who gather up the courage to walk in the door for the first time. It is daunting for anyone over 30 years of age and over 80 kilos to walk into a gym..
- Set up local authority walking clubs - led by a personal trainer who will stop to include mini circuits in the walk.
- Set up a government on-line and phone personal training system. People can sign up cheaply and have a half hour phone consultation every week with a trainer who will give programmes, set goals, offer feedback and encouragement, get around psychological

- problems. The online gym will have DVD clips showing how to perform exercises correctly as well as lots of 'show don't tell' stories from unlikely people who have turned their lives around through fitness. I can provide you with hundreds, eg a 177 kilo woman who is now a size 12 - 14 personal trainer, a 120 kilo 40-a-day smoker who is now a pump and body combat teacher, a former model who ballooned after being put on anti depressants and started a new fitness regime walking up and down her garden path...
- Organise suck it and see sports days where people can try a new easy-to-take-up sport for free - cycling, mountain biking, body boarding, circuit training, roller-blading, netball, soccer.
 - Set up beginners clubs and also 50 + clubs.
 - Give Masters Athletics and Sports clubs support. The Australian Masters Athletics Championships were pushed out to Blacktown this year so no-one came to watch and be inspired. This was because even the warm-up track at Homebush was too expensive for them - despite sitting empty that weekend.

Similarly diets - the Australian Psychological Society published a survey a couple of years back revealing that while 97 per cent of the population has tried to change their diets, 40 per cent lapsed once they'd reached their goal and 22 per cent said their diet lasted only weeks.

Have challenges, give people ideas - Family Dinner Week, No Packet Food Week.

Put taxes on processed foods and make supermarkets put real food on their eye-level shelves instead of foods that pay a premium.

Have online/phone Slim counsellors giving diet ideas, goals, psychological support - lots of people over eat for emotional reasons and need to learn to set barriers.

Organise healthy cookery classes.

PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit