

Media Release

Use of television air-time immoral by some sectors of the weight loss industry

Recent irresponsible behaviour by sectors of the Australian weight loss industry has led to criticism and worse for some players. The number of obese and overweight people has skyrocketed in recent decades and this hasn't been overseen by some of the more aggressive entrepreneurs in the billion dollar weight loss market. Trying to gain a foot-hold in the lucrative market has meant immoral concepts and marketing has become a prevalent concern. Consumers of weight loss products and services, now more than ever, have to be on their guard against shrewd marketers of ill devised and unsafe activities.

Recent examples of such immoral behaviour are:

- February 2007, the National Drugs and Poisons Schedule Committee revoked the popular weight loss drug Xenical's direct-to-consumer advertising approval, after complaints from industry groups that the weight-loss drug was being dispensed to consumers who did not need it. Industry groups had campaigned for an advertising ban on the drug since advertisements for Xenical, were screened during the popular youth television programme *Australian Idol*. The impartial CHOICE organisation became concerned about how Xenical was sold after reports young girls with a healthy weight were successfully buying the drug. CHOICE media spokesperson Indira Naidoo said, "Our secret shadow-shop found that 24 out of 30 pharmacies dispensed Xenical to a 19-year-old girl with a healthy-weight."
- Hit television show *The Biggest Loser* has been condemned by health experts for the harmful examples they set for many overweight and obese people struggling to lose weight. Eating behaviour expert with the Butterfly foundation, Dr Rick Kausman said in relation to the amount of fast weight loss experienced by competitors in the television show, "it causes stress on the body and a range of health problems. This show is a shameful process that is a very unhelpful way to make change. People watching it who are doing really well with their weight think they're going too slowly compared with the show's contestants."

Director of the healthy lifestyle and healthy weight loss program Appetite Right™, Dimitra Arthur says, "Clearly there should have been more health warnings displayed by the producers during each episode of *The Biggest Loser*. It is an obvious outcome that ordinary viewers of the program would believe the intense exercise routine to be safe. For the producers to disregard their audience's natural tendency to replicate the exercises is an unashamed disgrace."

"You must remember, at least three of the program's contestants were forced to leave the competition because of serious health scares originating from the extreme exercise schedule. Contestants in the program were obviously carefully monitored by health professionals, but this level of medical supervision isn't available for the average person exercising at home."

To achieve healthy weight loss Dimitra recommends, "Those who are overweight, or trying to improve their health, should realise that only an appropriate and permanent change of lifestyle can help deliver improved wellbeing. To achieve success, you need to eat healthy foods in moderation and participate in regular sensible exercise. You must become aware of the role eating plays in your life, and learn how to use positive thinking and behavioural coping strategies to manage your eating and your weight. Most importantly to achieve permanent health improvements, there simply are no short cuts. But this shouldn't put people off; there are many healthy programs here to help like Appetite Right™.

For further comment, or information on the Appetite Right™ program please contact:

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