

Beat the battle of the bulge

The experts who will guide our finalists through the 12-week challenge to be Brisbane's Slimmer of the Year share their strategies for success with **Emma Portelli**

We were overwhelmed by the entries to our Brisbane's Slimmer of the Year competition and the six finalists have been selected. As this issue of *bmag* went to print the final six candidates were going through their weigh-in with the experts at Betty Baxter and their real "fitness ages" were being analysed by Fitness First trainers ready to begin the 12-week challenge to find Brisbane's Slimmer of the Year.

We weren't surprised by the response to our quest to find Brisbane's Slimmer of the Year. After all, it's no longer news that obesity has reached epidemic proportions. More than half the Queensland population is overweight or obese – three in five men, half of all women and one in five children are carrying too much weight. Our weight problem costs Queensland \$11.6 billion a year, which is a 42 percent increase in three years, and with the prevalence of obesity expected to more than double by 2025 the cost is only going to blow out even further. The cost to younger generations is likely to be even greater, with shorter life expectancy the likely consequence of poor diet and lifestyle habits.

The fact that this presents a shocking picture for the future has been recognised by both federal and state governments which are implementing strategies to try

to halt the rise, and even turn it around. According to Dr Linda Selvey, executive director for Population Health Queensland, the biggest concern is complacency. The problem has become so widespread that we are beginning to accept being overweight as normal, and there's no doubt that, like the weight itself, it's harder to go back. "It impacts on motivation," Dr Selvey said.

One campaign designed to challenge the norm is *Measure Up*, a joint effort by the federal government and states and territories. The aim is to get people to measure their waist circumference rather than their weight or body mass index (BMI). A waist measurement more than 94cm for men and 80cm for women indicates the person has a higher risk of chronic diseases, such as diabetes or heart disease, because fat in this area of the body tends to sit around internal organs. "What it's trying to do is shake people up a bit and remind them that this is a health issue," Dr Selvey said.

According to accredited dietitian Amanda Clark, who has been practising for over 20 years, changing eating habits is one of the hardest steps to losing weight. "We're surrounded by food. There are so many easy opportunities," she explained. In an increasingly time poor society many of us take the easy way out, including when it comes to dieting, but Clark said this only

adds to the problem. Her advice is not to commit to a diet that you wouldn't keep up forever.

"Start the way you plan to finish. If you wouldn't be prepared to sign up to follow a particular eating plan forever than don't do it in the short term," she said.

According to Clark the biggest problem is people simply eat too much with meal portion sizes

way beyond what most of us really need.

Not surprisingly, waist size has been going up steadily along with portion size. It's such a fundamental flaw in our eating habits it has motivated Clark to write a book, *Portion Perfection*, which provides a comprehensive pictorial guide to what a serve should look like from breakfast to dinner, including snacks. And it's the between-meal snacks which have become our downfall. "Twenty years ago a Kit Kat was two little sticks of chocolate weighing in at 20g and contained about 100 calories, which is completely appropriate for a snack. Today, you can get a Kit Kat Chunky in king size which has 409 calories. That's a meal, that's no longer a snack but we eat these things as a snack," she said.

Here is what our Brisbane's Slimmer of the Year experts had to say about successful weight loss strategies:

Rochelle Lane

Rochelle Lane, naturopath and Betty Baxter trainer

Rochelle Lane has seen countless people achieve their weight loss goals on the Betty Baxter Complete Weight Management Program, including one woman who lost more than 40kg. According to Lane, one of the most common issues Betty Baxter consultants come across is emotional eating which can be compounded once a person tries to diet. "When people first start to lose weight it can be an extremely stressful time. They're embarking on a huge journey – some want to lose 30 to 40 kilos. It's a huge feat to think they can actually do that and stay motivated," Lane said. That's why the Betty Baxter program takes a holistic approach to help people succeed. "Our consultants are training people how to lead a healthier lifestyle, not just through diet

