



## **Background**

Fernwood Women's Health Clubs is currently in its 17th year in the health and fitness industry, after being established as a single club in Bendigo, Victoria in 1989. With the first franchise opening in 1994, there are now 70 clubs across Australia with a further 80 clubs due to open by 2008.

Today, with national reach, Fernwood is the largest organisation of its kind in Australia, with more than 80,000 members, 2,275 employees, an annual turnover in excess of \$75 million, and 89% unprompted recall of its brand name – as shown in studies conducted by Sweeney Research in 2004.

## **Growth**

With a target of 150 clubs by 2008, Fernwood Women's Health Clubs plan to venture into the New Zealand, Canadian and other international markets whilst continually developing and diversifying the offering of member services, including a full range of spa and beauty treatment facilities in selected clubs.

## **Core offering**

Fernwood Women's Health Clubs is a chain of health clubs designed specifically for women offering a wide range of programs, services and fitness options for everyone, regardless of their age or level of fitness. Focusing on the core philosophy of 'empowering women to shine', Fernwood take a holistic and wellness approach and believe that a woman's wellbeing is about more than just fitness.

Women can enjoy physical activity, learn about the importance of good nutrition and embark on weight management support through the Slimplicity program, whilst improving their self confidence, health and wellbeing, in a sociable, comfortable and supportive environment.

## **Why women join Fernwood**

Women join Fernwood because it addresses a need in the community for women to have their own special space – a sanctuary, to enjoy regular exercise to reach their health, fitness and wellbeing goals. It is a non-intimidating, friendly environment created so women of all shapes and sizes will feel comfortable in exercising.

## **Differences between Fernwood and mixed sex fitness providers**

- There is no feeling of competitiveness or intimidation that often comes with a mixed sex fitness provider
- The average age of a Fernwood member is 30-35
- Demographics vary greatly depending on the location of the club
- Fernwood members are often trying to fit their health and fitness routine in amongst a myriad of other priorities and roles they play in their lives
- Members look for role models that are "real" women. Women they can relate to. Women who are facing the same challenges in their lives as they are.
- Fernwood members tend to create a community within the club, they don't just go there to work out – they go to meet friends and have timeout for themselves
- Women feel comfortable using all facilities of our clubs including weights equipment



- Fernwood provides the special touches that women love i.e. free breakfast, free toiletries, sparkling facilities, friendly staff
- Fernwood has “Member Motivators” who are dedicated staff members on the floor at all times to answer questions members have, correct technique to ensure members are getting the most out of their workouts and to motivate and inspire members.
- The majority of women who join Fernwood have never used a gym before
- Group Fitness classes and Yoga and Pilates are particularly popular with women
- Most members are activated during the first 4 weeks of joining a club. Forming a habit is essential to the long term commitment to health and fitness
- Personal Training is very popular amongst members
- Most members who leave Fernwood do so because of moving away, time or financial reasons – rarely are they dissatisfied.

### **Barriers to women’s participation in fitness activities**

- Many women cite “financial reasons” for not joining or cancelling their membership. With the growing epidemic of obesity in Australia and the health risks associated with this, the government should consider providing incentives/kickbacks for women to become involved in sport and recreation.
- Government pressure on health insurers to also provide greater incentives/kickback in methods of disease prevention like exercise (some do this already).
- Encouraging women to become role models in the area of health and fitness
- Education of Australian women on the benefits of regular exercise in disease prevention
- Education of Australian women on the health risks associated with the growing obesity epidemic in Australia
- Education of Australian women on the benefits of regular exercise in recovery and rehabilitation
- Education of young girls on the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, teaching them about healthy eating and looking after yourself sensibly