



Experts warn against quick blitz on kilos

Worth the weight

Marianne Betts

health reporter

WHILE popular television weight-loss shows inspire viewers to shed excess kilos, experts are cautioning against sudden, extreme regimens.

The verdict appears to be that *Excess Baggage* may have the edge over *The Biggest Loser* in showcasing a more rounded approach.

The AMA warns engaging in extreme physical activity unsupervised may increase the risk of heart attacks and falls.

AMA president Dr Steve Hambleton said the shows did inspire people to lose weight, showing it was possible via changes to diet and exercise.

However, people should make slow, steady and sustainable changes, aiming to lose up to 2-3kg a month, Dr Hambleton said.

"The unusual way these programs go about weight loss is not suitable

for the general public, not without risks," he said. "The average overweight person ... may have diabetes, coronary artery disease or osteoarthritis and may not be suitable for an intense program."

Nutrition and fitness expert Donna Aston said *Excess Baggage* had a bigger focus on both nutrition and the psychology of weight loss.

"It's hard to sustain weight loss without changing our mindset," she said.

Excess Baggage contestants also had their body composition measured to indicate whether muscle, water or fat had been lost, rather than just total weight loss, Ms Aston said.

Those to lose weight quickly often shed muscle, which slowed the metabolism and made it more difficult to keep the kilos off long-term, she claimed.

Dietitian Jemma

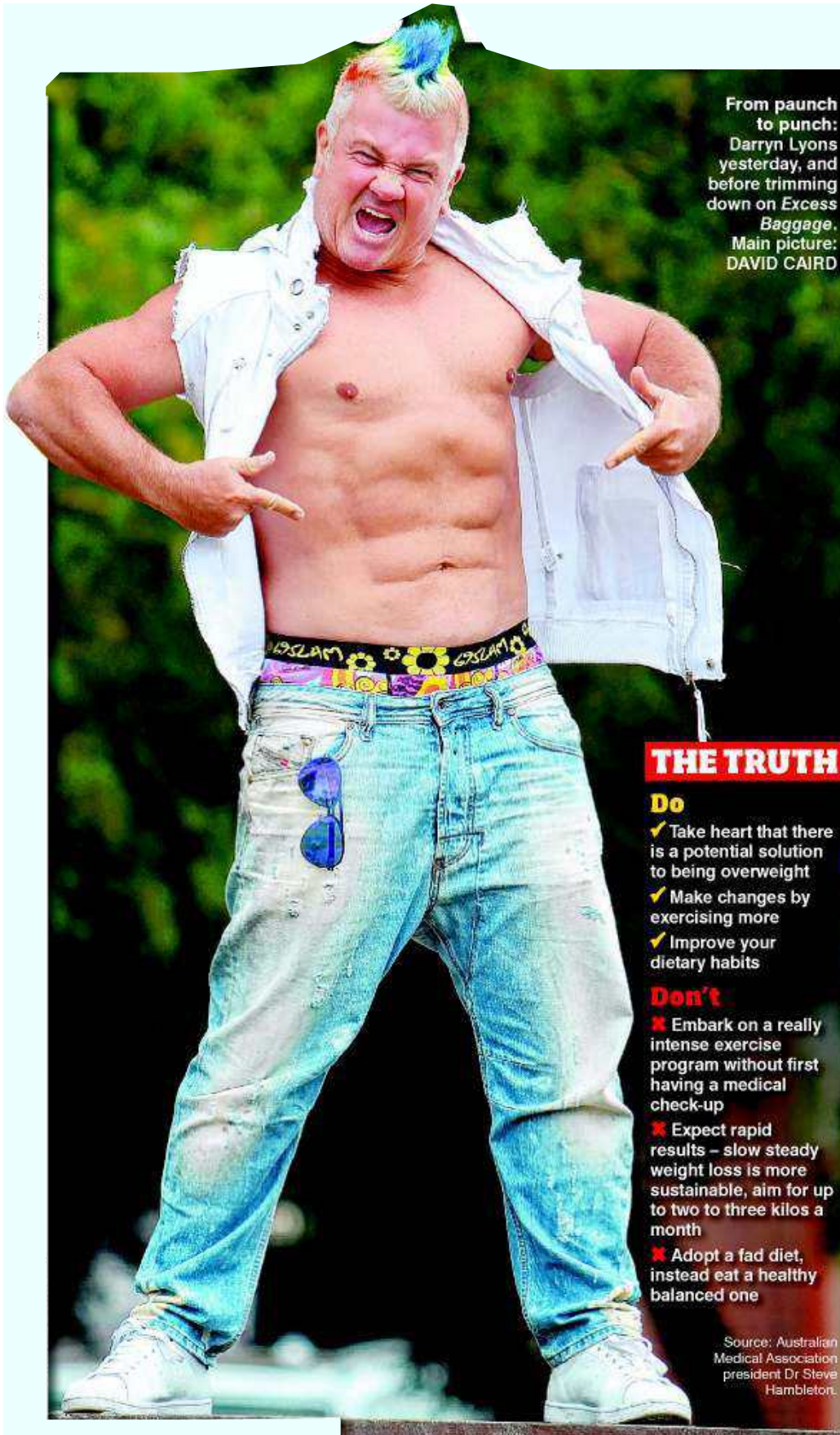
O'Hanlon said *Excess Baggage* took a more realistic approach to weight loss by not counting kilojoules or dictating diets.

"It's a much more educational process, teaching them to make lifestyle changes," Ms O'Hanlon said.

Obesity Policy Coalition senior adviser Jane Martin said shows tended to remove people from a real-life environment.

"It's like weight-loss rehab, but people are then coming out into an obesogenic environment, which is going to undermine them," Ms Martin said.





From punch to punch: Darryn Lyons yesterday, and before trimming down on *Excess Baggage*.
Main picture: DAVID CAIRD

THE TRUTH

Do

- ✓ Take heart that there is a potential solution to being overweight
- ✓ Make changes by exercising more
- ✓ Improve your dietary habits

Don't

- ✗ Embark on a really intense exercise program without first having a medical check-up
- ✗ Expect rapid results – slow steady weight loss is more sustainable, aim for up to two to three kilos a month
- ✗ Adopt a fad diet, instead eat a healthy balanced one

Source: Australian Medical Association president Dr Steve Hambleton.