



Sunday Telegraph

Sunday 27/5/2007

Page: 25

Section: General News

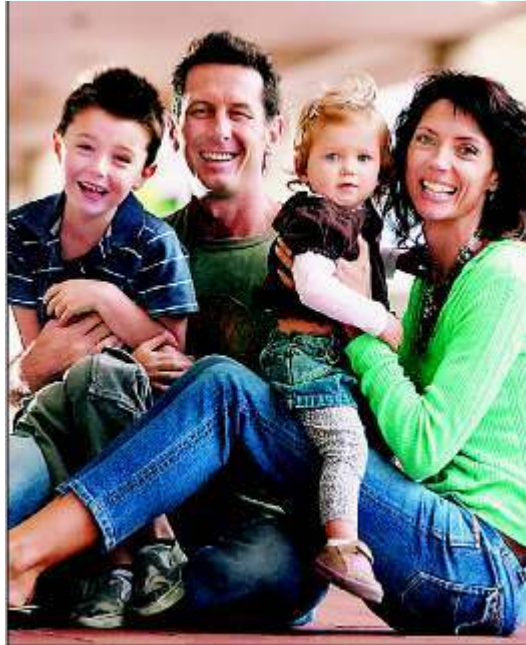
Region: Sydney Circulation: 694,528

Type: Capital City Daily

Size: 137.22 sq.cms.

Published: -----S

Brief: WEIGHT_MNT



Warning: Martha with husband Kieren and children Clancy and Opal

Get kids fit, not dieting

By health writer
CLAIR WEAVER

THE Federal Government should stop pouring millions of dollars into developing weight-loss diets for children and invest in fitness instead, according to a respected Australian scientist.

Martha Lourey-Bird, a lecturer in the school of public health and community medicine at the University of NSW, warns restricting young children's diets can do more harm than good.

Encouraging them to get into the habit of regular exercise is a more effective way to prevent and tackle the obesity epidemic, which is often caused by sedentary lifestyles, she said.

"Do we really want to be talking to our

five-year-olds about food restrictions?" she said. "The Government is focusing on diets but I think we really should be promoting fun exercise options rather than food restrictions."

Her comments came after the Federal Government announced \$2 million for developing a CSIRO diet for children and another \$1 million for the health department to set up a "wellbeing plan" for children.

Ms Lourey-Bird believes this money would be better spent on developing bicycle tracks, more green spaces, safe playing areas and walk-to-school initiatives.

Too much time has passed since the Government's Life: Be In It exercise campaign, she added.