

Response to Criticism of the Fitness Industry and Training Standards

Recently the media has been highly critical of the standard of personal trainers and education providers in the fitness industry (SBS 'Insight' 27th April and Sydney Morning Herald 'Instructors Snub Fitness watchdog', 2nd May 2010).

It is a major concern to Fitnation that our industry is being portrayed in such a negative manner. Let me declare our self- interest up front. We have been an accredited training provider within the fitness industry for 14 years and have assisted in training thousands of people to become fitness instructors and personal trainers in that time.

The media articles have suggested that anybody without qualifications can set up as a personal trainer in Australia. Maybe they could call themselves a personal trainer, but there's no way they can gain registration or insurance without a qualification – so what is the likelihood of them gaining work? Next to nil!

Since 2001 there have been nationally accredited qualifications in the fitness industry, (the Certificate III & IV in Fitness) and these have become the accepted standard for people to be able to work as personal trainers. Insurance is obtained through the national registration schemes offered by Fitness Australia and Kinect Australia. Furthermore, the fitness industry and the general public have become more knowledgeable about these requirements and far more discerning in their selection of trainers. Fitness centres require their staff to be qualified, without such qualifications their insurance would be invalid.

There has also been negativity expressed about 'short courses' and 'online' courses not providing adequate training for personal trainers. The Certificate III & IV in Fitness courses are 'competency based' qualifications which means that they teach skills for employment. While they are part of the National Qualifications Framework there is no stipulation about the length of the qualification. Let me provide an example of why this is the case.

As part of the course students learn how to measure blood pressure. It may take one student 2 hours to gain competence in this skill whereas a second student may pick it up in 15 minutes.

In our experience as a training provider we have found that students learn at different rates and in a variety of ways. Some students learn by 'doing', others by reading and analyzing or watching and listening. At Fitnation, we try to provide you with the most suitable method of training to suit your circumstances and learning style.

Our online courses enable students to have the opportunity to access tutors, interact with anatomical models and displays, observe and listen to videostreams and presentations and discuss topics via forums.

Our contact courses are delivered in different timeframes to suit students who may wish to study fulltime or spread it over a longer duration to fit in with other work, family and sporting commitments.

Irrespective of the method of delivery, to obtain the Certificate IV in Fitness, students must also complete several practical assessments to ensure their knowledge and personal training skills meet the qualification standards. We use highly qualified and experienced staff in the delivery of courses and development of training resources.

It is unfair to compare the Certificate III & IV in Fitness to qualifications completed by health professionals such as physiotherapists and exercise physiologists. One of the key themes of the personal training qualification is to be able to recognise the limitations of the role and refer clients with more specialised needs to other health professionals when required.

There is no doubt that some personal trainers are better than others, just like some landscapers are better than their colleagues. But the fitness industry has made significant advancements over the years and is linking with the health sector to provide services to address the nation's growing problems in these areas. At Fitnation we are proud of our reputation within the fitness industry and will continue to provide the highest standards of training and customer service to meet the needs of our clients and the industry.

Steve Hore (B.Sc (Ex Phys), Grad Dip (Exercise Rehab), Dip.Ed)

Training Manager

Fitnation