



press clip

I think it works so well because people today are very time poor but we're a very fit population. — Erica French

Fitter way to strike up new friendships

Rob Bates

MOST people like to go on a few dates before getting physical with someone new but Woollahra-based personal trainer Erica French says that physical is the best way to start.

Fed up with the standard singles scenes in bars and clubs, Ms French decided to try something new.

"When I was out at bars doing the whole 'picking up' thing, it was just so bad and I thought there has to be a better way to meet quality people," she said. "It seemed like such an obvious idea but I did some research and found that no-one was doing it."

That idea was Fit2Date, an outdoor fitness training network for singles that is as much about meeting new people as it is about staying in shape.

"It's all done via the website, so

you just find a group in your area at a convenient time, pay online and then rock up at the park," Ms French said. "I think we've developed something where you get to see the real people; girls don't come with make-up packed on their face, they're just the real deal."

Launched in July last year, Fit2Date has been enthusiastically received by the fitness-conscious singles living in the Eastern Suburbs. So far, more than 400 people have participated, Ms French said, and three "serious" relationships have resulted.

"There's been lots of hook-ups and we're constantly hearing about dates – and that's just the ones we hear about," she said.

Once a group is formed members meet at the same time and place every week for four weeks, beginning with team work and then breaking

it down into pairs so that everyone gets to know everyone else.

"The way we do the training breaks down the barriers straight away," Ms French said.

"I think it works so well because people today are very time poor but we're a very fit population. Most people dedicate at least some time to staying in shape."

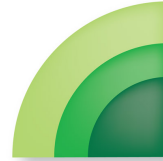
Ms French said starting the company was the best thing she had ever done and that it had restored her faith in men. "They're reliable, they turn up on time and they're open to new things," she said. "The guys that are coming through are just awesome and it's like, 'Finally, I knew you were out there somewhere'."

Ms French said the response to her idea had been so positive that she will travel to New York in June to start up a Fit2Date branch in Central Park.



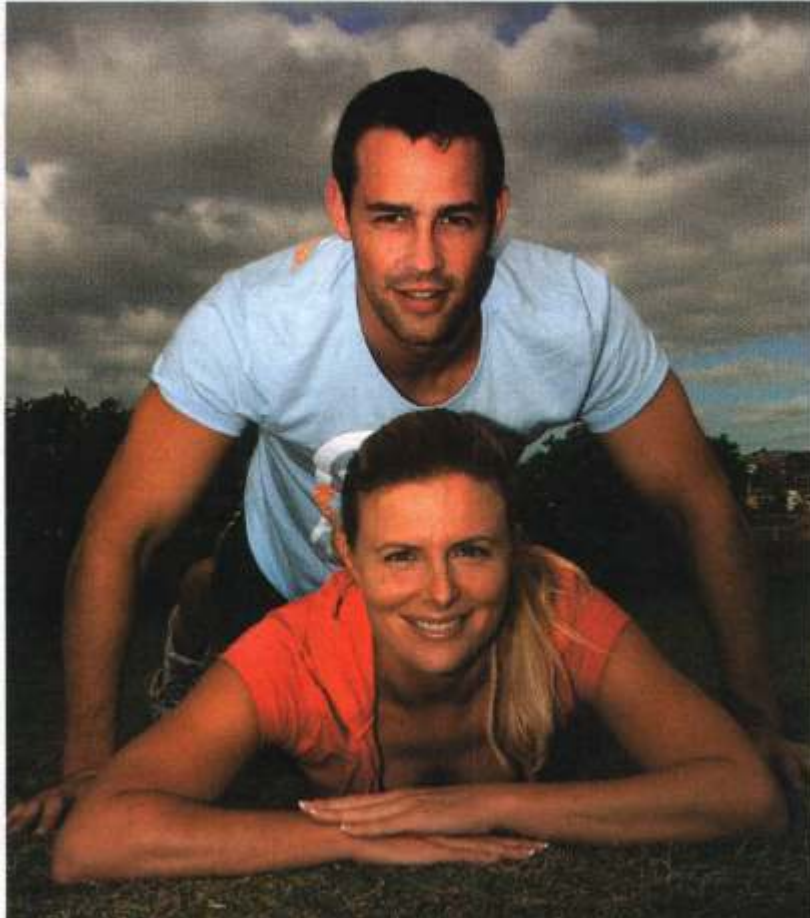
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Exercise dating entrepreneur Erica French (pictured with friend Chris Bartens) said she was motivated to start up her company after being disillusioned with the bar and club scene. Photo: ALAN PLACE