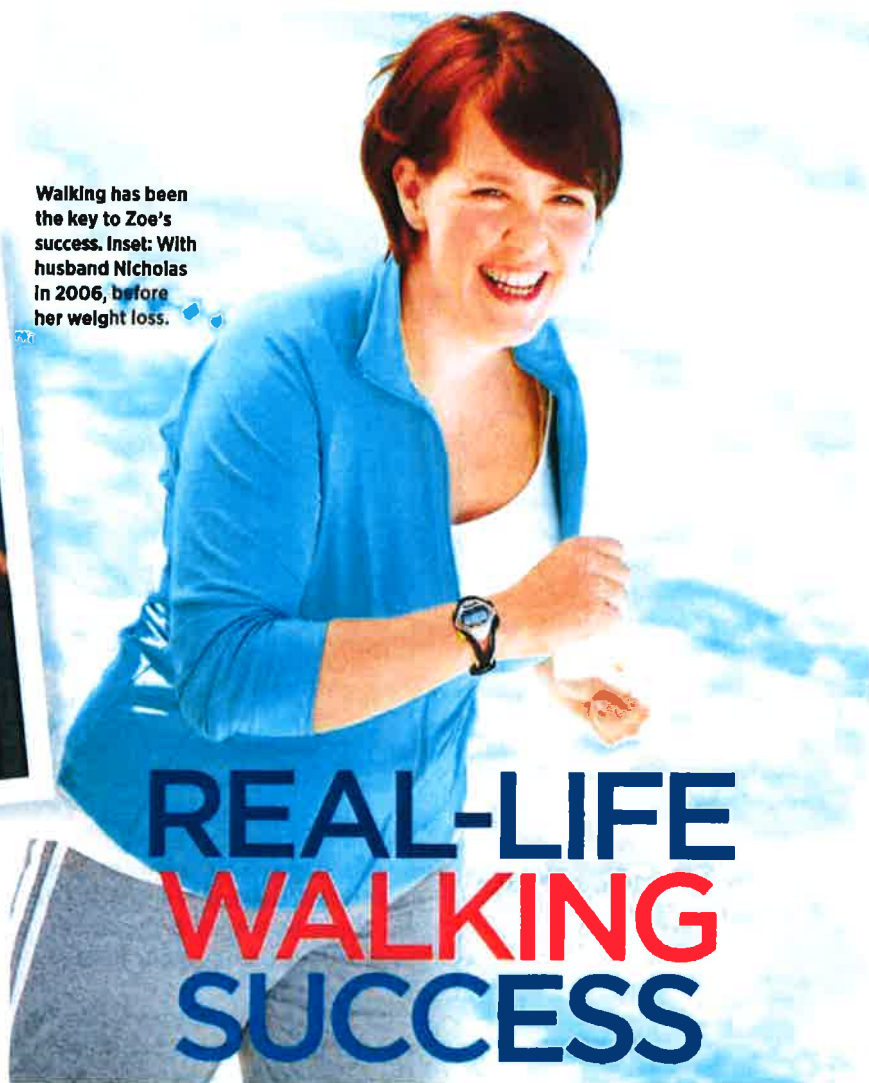




Walking has been the key to Zoe's success. Inset: With husband Nicholas in 2006, before her weight loss.



REAL-LIFE WALKING SUCCESS

Zoe Howard

Age: 40

Occupation: Nurse and mother of four-month-old Holly.

Height: 160cm.

Weight then: 88kg.

Weight afterwards: 63kg.

Personal motto: Dream big.

My weight used to go up and down a little, but I could usually get into a size 14. I wasn't tiny ... I'm only five-foot-three (160cm), but I felt pretty good about myself. I wasn't particularly concerned about my body.

Then, when I was 30, my grandfather died. We had been very close and losing him was terribly difficult. I missed him so much. I became depressed and I started to eat for comfort. Eating stopped me from thinking or feeling, but, of course, it caused me to gain weight. Each time I went shopping, I bought the next size up and suddenly there I was, buying size 18 or 20.

In 2005, I moved from the UK to Australia and it was then my weight

really became a problem. The lifestyle here is so outdoorsy and beach based. I wanted to get involved in it all, but I was concerned I wouldn't be able to keep up and even if I could have, I was too self-conscious to even try.

I was feeling bad about myself. I really wanted to do some sports, meet people, make some friends ... Then my husband went away for two weeks and I thought here's my chance to look at exactly what I eat and how much I do or don't exercise and do something about it.

I joined a weight-loss group and I started walking. It was a struggle. I lived near a great big hill and getting up it was tough, but I stuck with it. By the time my husband had come back, I'd lost a kilogram and I was feeling pretty good.

The more I walked, the easier it got and soon I was walking all the time. Then we moved to an area that was even hillier, but soon I was powering

up those hills, too. The weight came off slowly, but it came off. After two months, I'd lost 6kg. I really felt like I was heading in the right direction. I felt so much better.

It was about then I started running a few minutes here and there. And soon I was jogging instead of walking. I joined the fitness and fundraising group, Can Too, and ran a 9km race, then a half marathon, then a full marathon and then a 50km ultra marathon. And along the way I lost 25kg. It was so, so hard, but I got there. I still can't quite believe it.

Now, I'm back to walking again. I gained 18kg when I was pregnant with Holly and do you know how much I've lost since she was born? Only 2.3kg ... I have to lose weight all over again and even walking is hard work, but I've been here before and I know I can do it. How? By watching what I eat and walking as much as possible." ❧