



## Keeping Fit in the CBD

*You live in Melbourne's CBD? The pre-conception is that your environment with all the hustle and bustle and compact living could not possibly be healthy, compared to your suburban or country cousins. Is this so?*

Ten years ago, when I came to Melbourne from the Noosa Hinterland, a lovely semi-rural life style, people said I was crazy to want to live in the City. However, the first thing I noticed was the walking. In rural life, if you want to go anywhere, you get in the car. It is the only form of transport. The distances to every day facilities are just too far. The same happens in the suburbs. But in the city, with everything you need so close by, you walk. Lots of walking is good for you. City people are naturally quite fit as (most) walk everywhere.

Then there is the running. I thought that in the "business district" one would not be seen running around the streets in sports gear. Oh dear. How wrong I was. Everywhere, especially in the early mornings, people are out running and walking, heading for our wonderful parks on the fringes of the CBD. "The Tan" that extends 3.8km around the Botanic Gardens is full of eager people doing their morning exercise. Such a beautiful location. If you want to do some Yoga or Tai Chi just step into the gardens to soak up nature and breathe the oxygen generated by the luscious vegetation.

If you need some guidance, the City of Melbourne hosts free fitness classes out of doors in Federation Square. From time to time, fitness stores conduct running classes in preparation for the many fun runs that occur in the city throughout the year – Run Melbourne, Run for the Kids, the Mother's Day Classic, Spring into Shape to name a few.

All of these activities keep the city's residents fit and well and most importantly, they are free. What the city offers is the opportunity for people to live healthy lives without having to spend a lot of money.

City people live in high rise where there are always fire escape stairs to challenge the adventurous. One of our intrepid Residents 3000 members trained for the Kokoda Trail, by walking up and down the stairs of her 18-floor building. An easy fitness habit is to take the stairs as often as possible. The stairs may take 5 minutes, but you may wait 5 minutes for the lift anyway! One method is really good for your health and the other is not.

Then there is the Capital City Trail, which is a shared use path for cyclists and pedestrians circling the Melbourne city centre. It is 29 km in length, and mostly consists of sections of other trails, such as the Merri Creek Trail, Main Yarra Trail, Moonee Ponds Creek Trail and Inner Circle Rail Trail. I know that two of our members regularly take the trail every Sunday morning for a relaxing ride and to enjoy the scenery. I suspect, knowing Melbourne, there are opportunities for a stop or two for coffee and cake!

But, of course many CBD dwellers prefer lapping up their fitness in the water. The answer may be the Melbourne City Baths that was first opened in 1860. It has the CBD's largest 30 metre indoor pool, spa and sauna and is open all year round. There is an extensive range of services - from gym, group fitness classes, cycle studio and squash courts to reformer Pilates beds, stretching areas and more.

Thus, the city can provide you with a healthy existence if you want it. It is all around and you do not have to be wealthy to take advantage of the many opportunities to keep yourself fit.