

Physical transformation inspires Newcastle office to tackle triathlon



It was all Jirsch Sutherland Partner [Stewart Free's](#) fault, really. His unwavering commitment to a healthy lifestyle over the past year, which saw him lose more than 50 kilos, was the reason colleague Tina Battye suggested they form a team to compete in the upcoming *2017 Newcastle City Triathlon*.

It didn't take too much encouragement from Stewart and Tina for six other intrepid colleagues from the Newcastle office to sign up for the event's Corporate/Entice race, which consists of a 300m swim, a 15km cycle and 3km run. Stewart and Tina, along with **Shari Branscombe**, **Caitlin Johnston** and **Christine Trlifaj** chose to compete as individuals while [Bradd Morelli](#), **Hayden Asper** and **Veronica Vogel** formed a relay team. And then the hard part started: training.

Everyone started with varying levels of fitness, though no one was "triathlete" level, and despite busy schedules they all managed to squeeze in some time to train. For Stewart, this challenge would cap off a year in which he shed over 50 kilos not by joining Weight Watchers, going Paleo, low protein or adopting the latest celebrity diet, but by making healthy food choices and regularly exercising. "The triathlon was the one year anniversary of when I first committed to a healthier lifestyle to lose weight and become fit," he explains. "So far I've lost 52kg. I was also fortunate to have had a lot of support from family and friends."

His "big fitness binge", as he calls it, over the past year enabled him to take on the additional pre-triathlon training which involved a self-imposed run up and down the Merewether Ocean Baths stairs. "I got to know the stairs, all 100 of them, very well! In fact, I became addicted to them!" says Stewart, with modest amazement.

Against the odds



Fast forward to Sunday, February 26, and “Team Jirsch Sutherland” was ready, pumped and jostling with hundreds of other contestants at the Queens Wharf starting line, cheered on by family, friends and colleagues from the office.

To cut a long race short, they all completed the triathlon, braving rainy, blustery weather, a strong current and a couple of unexpected bike issues.

“All up, it was very satisfying to finish and a good team building event. And we really appreciated the support from the office,” Stewart adds, clearly proud of his team’s effort. “I think we’ll order new business cards incorporating the title ‘Triathlete’ for the lot of us!” Tongue in cheek? Perhaps not, as he has already signed up for the Gold Coast Corporate Triathlon in April and is scanning the office for possible team members. “I’ve got a bit of a bug for it now,” he admits.