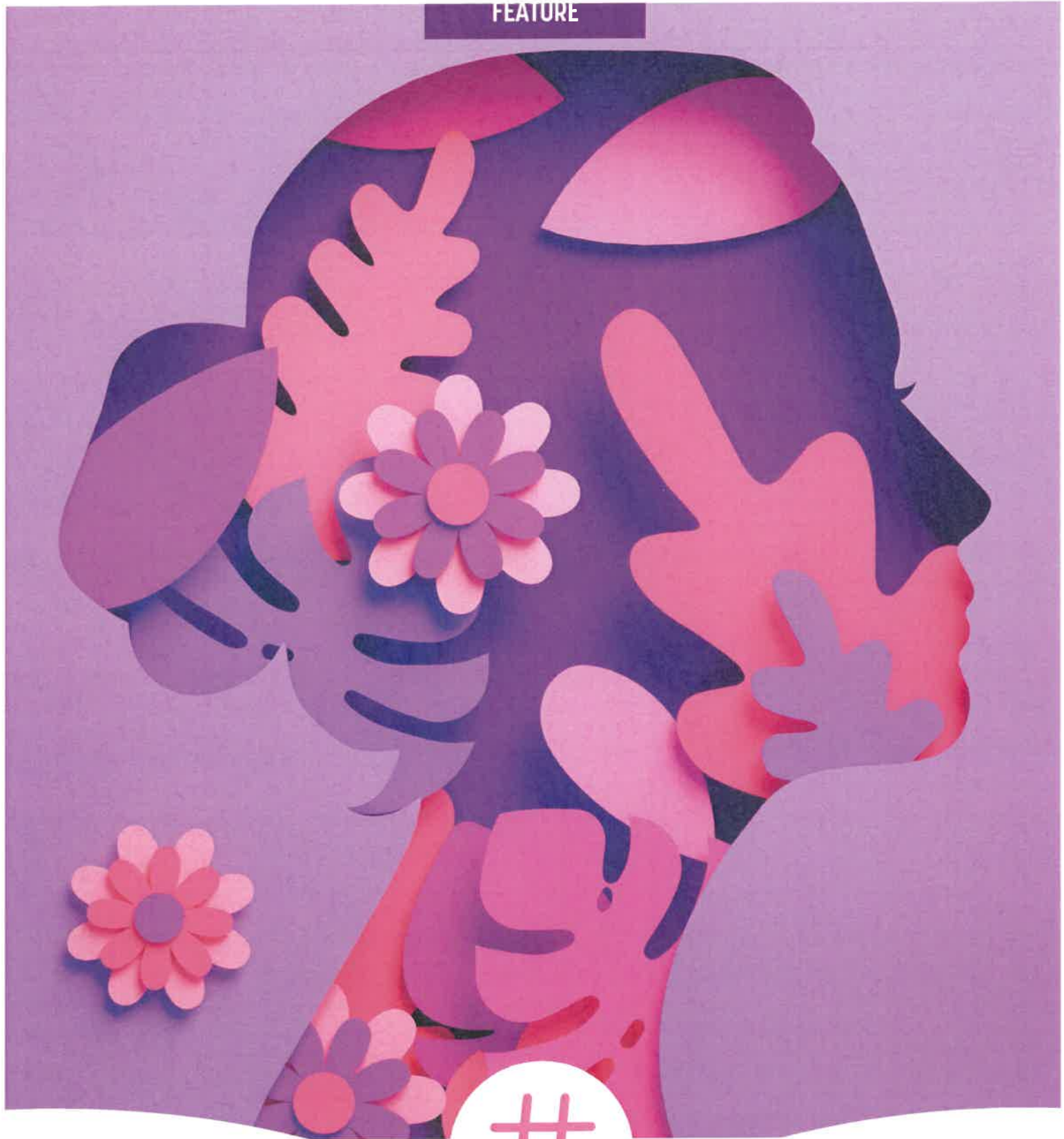


FEATURE



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*Inspire Inclusion*

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International Women's Day 2024

Imagine a gender equal world. A world free of bias, stereotypes, and discrimination. A world that's diverse, equitable, and inclusive. A world where difference is valued and celebrated. Together we can forge women's equality. Collectively we can all #InspireInclusion.

This is the theme for International Women's Day 2024. When we inspire others to understand and value women's inclusion, we forge a better world. And when women themselves are inspired to be included, there's a sense of belonging, relevance, and empowerment.



**We take this opportunity to celebrate an Australian icon in the fitness industry - Diana Williams, founder & CEO of Fernwood Fitness.**

## Diana's Story

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In the realm of fitness and female empowerment, few names echo as resoundingly as Diana Williams. Her path to establishing Fernwood Fitness transcended mere business ambitions; it was a heartfelt endeavour fueled by passion and a drive to defy societal conventions. From her earliest forays into weight training and powerlifting to the birth of Fernwood, Diana's mission remained unwavering: to forge a haven where women could embrace strength training within a supportive and inclusive environment.

In 1989, spurred by her passion for fitness and powerlifting, and a fervent wish to cultivate a nurturing community for women, Diana embarked on a bold venture, bringing the first Fernwood Fitness health club to life. Nestled in a reclaimed classroom in Bendigo, the gym, though modest in dimensions, held grand ambitions. It was within these humble confines that Diana laid the groundwork for what would swiftly become a nationwide sensation.



"I was engrossed in weight training and powerlifting, witnessing firsthand the transformative impact it had on me. I felt compelled to share this experience with other women," reflects Diana. In an era where weight training predominantly belonged to the realm of men, Diana discerned its potential to revolutionise the lives of women. Her aim was to shatter the confines of stereotypes that relegated women to aerobic exercises and to give them an avenue to explore their strength and potential.



"During that era, weightlifting was perceived as a male domain, while women were expected to do aerobics. I envisioned a space where women could gather and work out their way, while reveling in the joy of weight training," says Diana. And so, Fernwood Fitness was conceived—a sanctuary where women could push boundaries, uplift one another, and redefine the definition of strength.





The early stages were fraught with challenges as Diana navigated the intricacies of entrepreneurship and sought to carve a niche within the predominantly male-dominated fitness industry. Yet, propelled by her unyielding belief in the importance of empowering women, she persisted. "Every hurdle only served to stoke my resolve to create something truly extraordinary for women," she divulges.

Quickly gaining traction, Diana's commitment to fostering a sense of community remained steadfast.

**"Fernwood is more than just a gym; it's a**

*sisterhood*

**- a place where women can come together, support each other, socialise, and celebrate their strength,"**

she explains. This ethos of inclusivity and empowerment became the cornerstone of Fernwood's identity, attracting women from all walks of life.





Over the years, Fernwood's influence has been profound, not only reshaping the fitness landscape but also redefining perceptions of women's capabilities.

Liberated from societal constraints and unshackled from gender stereotypes, women now embrace strength training as a conduit for empowerment and self-expression.

As Fernwood Fitness continues its trajectory of evolution and expansion, Diana stays steadfast in her original vision of empowering women through strength, sisterhood, and spaces devoid of the distractions or pressures often encountered in co-ed gyms.

Fast-forward to 2024, and Fernwood Fitness has grown from a solitary gym in Bendigo to a national franchise boasting 71 clubs and over 80,000 members nationwide - a testament to Diana's entrepreneurial acumen and fidelity to her vision.

In Diana Williams, we meet not just a business luminary but a trailblazer - a pioneer who dared to challenge the status quo and craft a domain where women could flourish. Her legacy serves as a poignant reminder that true strength is not solely confined to physical prowess but also lives in the courage to defy expectations and embrace one's own power. And in the spirit of International Women's Day, Fernwood Fitness stands as a testament to Diana's vision - a sanctuary where women continue to thrive, uplifted by the ethos of strength, solidarity, and sisterhood she instilled.







# International Women's Day

Let's forge a  
more inclusive  
world for women  
and collectively  
**#InspireInclusion**



March 8

[www.internationalwomensday.com](http://www.internationalwomensday.com)