NEWS LESSON

# When Wellness Becomes a Business, Who Is the Customer?



## BEFORE YOU READ

### 1 Warm up

Talk about these questions with a partner.

1. Can advice be both commercially motivated and genuinely useful, or does a sales motive always weaken it in your eyes?
2. How much do you think algorithms shape what people believe about their bodies?
3. What would make you trust a stranger's health claims online?

### 2 Key words

These words are in the article. Write the letter of the meaning (A to H) in each box.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **virtuous** | ☐ | |
| 2 | **parasocial** | ☐ | |
| 3 | **projection** | ☐ | |
| 4 | **misinformation** | ☐ | |
| 5 | **accountable** | ☐ | |
| 6 | **dietitian** | ☐ | |
| 7 | **clinical** | ☐ | |
| 8 | **regulated** | ☐ | |

| | |
|---|---|
| A | an estimate of future figures based on current information |
| B | controlled by official rules |
| C | a trained expert in food and nutrition |
| D | behaving in a morally good way |
| E | based on direct observation of patients rather than on laboratory research |
| F | false or misleading information, often spread without bad intent |
| G | describing a one-sided bond with someone you only know through media |
| H | required to explain your actions and accept the consequences |

## 3 Read

Read the article and underline the key words from task 2. The paragraphs are numbered.

**Australian specialists argue that on social media, genuine health guidance and commercial diet culture have become hard to tell apart. Their evidence is mostly clinical experience, and their central question is about incentives.**

1 Few words have enjoyed such an effortless rise as "wellness". It sounds benign, even virtuous. An ABC News report published in Australia on 1 November 2026 gathers eating disorder specialists who argue that, on social media, genuine health guidance and commercial diet culture have become difficult to tell apart.

2 The starting point is personal. Kathleen McBride, 30, recovered from an eating disorder and now works at a residential treatment centre on Queensland's Sunshine Coast. She says that as a teenager she took in messages from adverts and celebrities implying that a woman's worth depended on her body. What alarms her is continuity: the same assumptions, she argues, have been repackaged as wellness and delivered by algorithms that keep serving up such content to young people.

3 The economics matter, and so does the way they are described. The Global Wellness Institute, an industry research body, forecast in 2024 that the global wellness economy would grow from roughly 6.3 trillion US dollars in 2023 to about nine trillion by 2028. That is a projection, not a measured result. The Butterfly Foundation, an Australian eating disorder charity, nevertheless cited it in September to frame a pointed question: when so much money is at stake, whose interests do the messages we are sold about our bodies actually serve?

4 The specialists are not simply hostile to information. Dr Angela Hinz, a researcher at the University of the Sunshine Coast, calls the influence of social media on young people's body image well established, yet she also notes a genuine trend among young Australians towards being health conscious. Her worry lies in the format: short videos encourage parasocial relationships, in which viewers feel close to creators who have never met them, and combined with misinformation they can end up turning the body into a project with no finish line.

5 Precision is essential about what is claimed. Eating disorders are serious illnesses with many contributing factors, and nobody quoted says that social media creates them on its own. The charity and the dietitian interviewed point instead to diet culture, the notion that some bodies are inherently better than others, and describe dieting as one of the largest risk factors that can be changed. On this reading, social media is an amplifier rather than a cause, and it can blur the line between health guidance and advertising. The evidence offered is largely clinical experience and expert opinion, which says little about how widespread the problem is.

6 The proposed remedies reflect different views of responsibility. Dr Hinz favours stronger duty-of-care laws, so that harmful content is flagged and removed and creators who profit from it are held accountable. Mathieu Cadart, who works in a treatment centre, accepts that platforms should police content better but insists that creators carry a moral duty too. Dr Hinz argues for accurate, regulated material to be easier to find, which turns the debate towards what trustworthy guidance would look like.

7 If the topic affects you or someone close to you, a doctor or a specialist support service is the right place to start. For everyone else, the report leaves a practical test that is easier to state than to apply: when advice arrives with a price tag or a brand deal attached, ask who has skin in the game.

Sources: ABC News Australia, Eating disorder experts warn against online wellness trends; Butterfly Foundation, Who really benefits? Body Image and Eating Disorder Awareness Week challenges the stories we're sold about 'wellness'. Picture: AI illustration.

## 4 True, false or not given

Circle **T** (true), **F** (false) or **NG** (the article does not say).

1. The institute's forecast implies growth of more than two trillion US dollars between 2023 and 2028. T F NG
2. Dr Hinz sees young Australians' interest in health as a cause for concern in itself. T F NG
3. Dr Hinz and Mathieu Cadart both put responsibility on creators as well as on platforms. T F NG
4. Kathleen McBride has campaigned for the duty-of-care laws that Dr Hinz favours. T F NG
5. The specialists present dieting as a risk that people cannot realistically change. T F NG

## 5 Vocabulary

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed.

| contributing | flagged | frame | hostile | mimic | notion | oblivious | police |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. The committee was not _____ to reform; it simply wanted more evidence first.
2. The _____ that success is measured in followers has proved hard to shake.
3. Critics say platforms are reluctant to _____ their own content because outrage keeps users scrolling.
4. Campaigners tried to _____ the debate as a matter of public health rather than personal choice.
5. Posts that breach the guidelines are _____ by users and then reviewed by moderators.
6. Family history and isolation may be _____ factors in the illness.

## 6 Word forms

Use the word in brackets to make a word that fits the gap.

1. Critics accused the campaign of _____ , pointing out that it promoted the very products it condemned. (HYPOCRITE)
2. The charity was right to treat the figure with _____ , since it was a forecast. (CAUTIOUS)
3. A creator whose income depends on sales can hardly be called _____ . (PARTIAL)
4. Experts urged platforms to improve the _____ of their moderation systems. (TRANSPARENT)
5. The evidence is _____ , since it rests largely on opinion rather than large surveys. (CONCLUDE)

## 7 Language focus: prepositions

Complete the sentences with words from the box. Two words are not needed. At this level the trap is the adjective plus preposition pair. Choose the one that belongs with the adjective, not the one that sounds natural in your own language.

| at | by | from | in | of | to | upon |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

1. Young viewers can be especially susceptible _____ polished, confident health claims.
2. Some critics see wellness culture as complicit _____ the spread of diet culture.
3. The charity's question was aimed _____ exposing who profits.
4. Regulators are wary _____ stifling legitimate health advice.
5. Creators are not exempt _____ responsibility for what they promote.

SPEAK

## 8 Talk about it

Discuss in pairs or small groups. Give reasons for your answers.

1. How should governments balance protecting young people with protecting free expression online?
2. Does the language of self-improvement empower people, or does it hide commercial interests? What is your own view?
3. What would a healthy culture of health information look like, and who would you trust to build it?

## 9 Role-play: is this video really healthy?

Work in pairs. Read your card, then have the conversation. Swap roles and do it again.

**Student A · the worried friend**

Your friend follows a wellness creator who sells supplements and says people should skip meals. You're worried. Ask who earns money from the posts, and suggest a better way to get advice.

**Student B · the friend who follows the creator**

You enjoy the creator's videos and feel more motivated. Explain what you like about them. Listen to your friend, then decide if you'll change anything.

**Useful phrases**

I'm a bit worried about those videos.
Who's making money from this?
I don't think it's that simple.
That's a fair point, but I'd still check it.
It's just a routine, it's not a big deal.
Could we ask a doctor together?

**Afterwards, tell the class: did the friend change their mind, and what would you do next?**

ANSWER KEY

**2 Key words**

1 D · 2 G · 3 A · 4 F · 5 H · 6 C · 7 E · 8 B

**4 True, false or not given**

1 T · 2 F · 3 T · 4 NG · 5 F

**5 Vocabulary**

1 hostile · 2 notion · 3 police · 4 frame · 5 flagged · 6 contributing

**6 Word forms**

1 hypocrisy · 2 caution · 3 impartial · 4 transparency · 5 inconclusive

**7 Language focus**

1 to · 2 in · 3 at · 4 of · 5 from

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