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EDITORIAL

# Naked Chef to bring a Ministry of Food

WE'VE observed in these columns in the past how the lives of many of us are dominated by healthy eating, diet and lifestyle. But we've noted how many are confused as to just what these simple precepts really mean.

The impending arrival of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food in Geelong, the first to be set up in Victoria, is an unusual but encouraging step toward rectifying this confusion.

Oliver's Ministry of Food centres, a kind of culinary community centre, will teach families the basics of preparing healthy meals, with 10-week courses training participants in how to cook and shop more healthily during 90-minute sessions.

The idea is to put up healthy eating courses to more than 10,000 people a year — plus shopping and cooking lessons, walking groups, canteen and cafe overhauls. It's all part of a pointed pitch by the State Government at tackling the problems of the

overweight, unhealthy and disadvantaged with eating and exercise programs.

Yesterday's announcement of corporate backers in two Geelong enterprises, GMHBA and The Good Guys, for the Ministry of Food outlet will bring this valuable resource another step closer to realisation.

As Ministry of Food Australia boss Alicia Peardon says: "There's a serious lack of knowledge about food and cooking, and the result is the modern-day epidemic of obesity and bad health we are currently facing."

Having said that, linking Ministry of Food training to ongoing lifestyle



changes remains something of an unknown quantity. All the education in the world might still be hard to put into action without ongoing support mechanisms from all three tiers of governments; local, state and federal. So while we see Spring St keen to welcome Jamie Oliver's initiative it must back this with money, not just words.

Oliver, for those living under a rock the past decade, is renowned for his international *The Naked Chef* TV programs and books, as well as his *Fifteen* restaurant group. The latter has enabled young unemployed people to, in Oliver's own words, believe in themselves, show them their past can be left behind and persuade them the future is theirs to create.

Here's hoping his Ministry of Food can achieve similar positive outcomes for Geelong and further afield.