



Tipping the scales at 141kg, Casey was ordered by doctors to lose 40kg.



CASEY HITS THE HALFWAY MARK

I'VE LOST 20KG

WORK



Well on her way to her goal weight, the singer is turning her life around

Playing up for the camera, there's a newfound sense of fun and self-belief to soulful singer Casey Donovan.

She's still 'big, beautiful and sexy', but the former *Australian Idol* winner is proud to say there's less of her these days. Twenty kilos less, to be precise.

'I feel great,' she says, with a beaming smile. 'My confidence is through the roof and I'm happy and full of life. I step outside every day with a smile on my face, and that's a long way from where I was.'

It's seven months since Casey set out to shed four dress sizes – and 40kg – on doctor's orders. She'd tried many times before, and failed. Doubt and negativity always defeated her.

Not even ironman Guy Leech, who trained her for a while, could shift the stubborn flab that made her teens a misery. Constantly bullied, she was an overweight misfit who couldn't buy school skirts large enough – and always wore a backpack to hide her wobbly bits.

'It's heartbreaking to have that when you're growing up,' she tells *New Idea*. 'I was continually being let down and I got hurt. I had no self-worth and I guess that's why I packed on so many kilos. It wasn't s***** food fat, it was emotional weight.'

But finally Casey is halfway to her slimming goal, despite debilitating illness and a gruelling theatre tour. With the help of life coach Tricia Brennan and trainers from the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence, she's down to 121kg and a size 20 to 22.

A little on the large side – as she's the first to admit – but a huge improvement on her previous 141kg and size 26, which was in part a legacy of polycystic ovarian syndrome.

'It's been tough and very, very demanding, so I'm really proud of myself,' grins the 22-year-old, whose *Big, Beautiful & Sexy* single and national tour kick off this month. 'Look, I'll never be

a stick insect – I will always have boobs and hips – but this whole experience has been life-changing. And I did it just for me!'

At last Casey feels she has beaten the lifelong depression that tainted even her 2004 *Idol* victory. What's more, she has finally reconciled with her

estranged father Merv Donovan, who ended up in court four years ago following a violent incident at one of her gigs.

'I think working with Tricia and cleaning out the closet, shall we say, it's something I needed to do. I approached him and

'My confidence is through the roof and I'm happy and full of life'

we are working through stuff, which is great,' she reveals. 'Now pretty much everything in my life is on the right path. It takes a while to get to that happy place, but once you're there it's exhilarating and you're free at last.'

Casey, who recently won a Best Supporting Actress award

How Casey lost her first 20kg

- Downsizing all her meals.
- Eating more protein, salad, homemade soups, fruit and vegies.
- Cutting back on carbohydrates, fried food, other fats and dairy products.
- Eliminating late night, after-show snacks.
- Drinking lots of water to fill up and reduce her appetite.
- Walking more, instead of taking the car.
- Going to the gym three to four times a week, with a mix of cardio and weights.
- Not getting discouraged and giving up if she had a food binge.



at the Daegu International Musical Festival for her work on hit stage show *The Sapphires*, laughs for sheer joy.

'You can feel good about yourself and actually be proud to be who you are. I'm putting positive energy out into the universe, and all I'm getting back is positive energy. I reckon to come this far in six months is amazing!' she says.

No longer a grungy, disgruntled teenager, Casey has become a poster girl for larger women – and men – through her *Big, Beautiful & Sexy* Facebook support group, which has notched up nearly 5000 fans worldwide.

'It started small but it's grown, and today it's like having a bigger family, really,' she says. 'To see the confidence on big women's faces when I sing and they get up and dance, it's wonderful.'

'They're shaking their thing. Beautiful! Like me, I'm just having a great time and I don't care any more if strangers are looking at me weird.'

'I just want other people to get out there and get healthy, the way I have. It's about being active and enjoying yourself. Live life, that's what it's for!'

For the future, newly single Casey wants to perform in New York, start her own outsize fashion range, lose her next 20kg – and fall in love, preferably in Paris. Anything could happen, just watch this space... **NI**

By Jenny Brown

T OUT



Casey likes to keep her workouts varied and uses a combination of resistance and cardio for an all-over result.

