


Herald Sun

12 May 2020

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Gym owner's warning as outdoor fitness gets green light with eased restrictions

Fitness junkies dying to return to the gym have been forced to wait longer, despite the State Government allowing groups of 10 to train outside. But some gym owners have warned outside training could have bad consequences.

Brittany Goldsmith, Moorabbin Kingston Leader

 Subscriber only | May 11, 2020 5:30pm



 F45 Keysborough trainers Kate, Courtney and Mon are keeping in high spirits despite the State Government keeping gyms closed until at least June.

Melbourne's gym owners will have to wait at least three more weeks until they can throw open their doors, after indoor fitness was left off the State Government's list of activities that could resume as of midnight Tuesday.

With gyms shut down since March 23, fitness junkies in the southeast waited with bated breath for today's announcement – but despite golfing, hiking, waterskiing and other exercise activities getting the go-ahead, owners are not allowed to reopen.

Those wanting to break a sweat are allowed to do so outside in groups of up to 10 people, but gym owners could face a fine from their council if they run classes in public places without a permit.

And Fitness Edge Dingley Village owner Brent Stewart said training outdoors could be dangerous for injury prone or older aged members, with hazards at parks including slippery surfaces and inclement weather.

He told the *Leader* his team hoped for better news in June as the group did not have a council permit for its local park.

“It’s not ideal with things a bit wet underfoot, slightly slippery or uneven ... (outdoor training) is hard to schedule around winter weather too, so the timing isn’t ideal,” he said.

“It’s OK if you’re young but not so good for people aged 55 and over ... many (people) have pre-existing issues like hip and knee replacements. That’s not all of our clients but our decisions have to be for the entirety of our clients and they trust me to make the right decisions.

“The easing of restrictions looks OK on paper but every business (has to) look at it differently.

“We are hoping step two is available in June so there can be 10 people indoors ... this is definitely going to suit boutique-style franchises, but it will still be tough for larger franchises like F45 and Goodlife.”



Eleven Fitness Carrum Downs owner Louise Manders said there was a number of concerns to address before considering the idea of running small personal training sessions outdoors.

“(We have to think about) the interest (from members), getting equipment outdoors, locations, and most outdoor trainings need council permission ... I’m not sure what we will be doing yet,” she said.

“Everyone’s hanging out to get back into training ... as a small business and studio, we have really worked hard to try and survive.”

Inner Athlete Cheltenham founder Trent Pirihi, whose gym was recently crowned as Fitness Australia’s boutique fitness business of the year, said he would continue creating tailored at-home workout programs that would resemble his member’s normal training schedule as much as possible.

“We recognise that gyms are not solely about exercise, there is an element of human connection and socialisation that members enjoy,” operations manager Lorraine Pirihi said.

“To continue this, we hold weekly webinar sessions to cover holistic health and wellbeing conversations and resources, as well as weekly coffee catch-up sessions.”



Inner Athlete Cheltenham founder Trent Pirihi will have to stick to at-home sessions until restrictions are eased further. Picture: Valeriu Campan

At F45 Keysborough, personal trainer Courtney Osborne said the group had already developed a new operations system ready to be rolled out once the state's gyms finally get the green light.

“This includes social distancing, regular cleaning and disinfecting, and the changing of class times to reduce the cross over of members and allow for time between to clean equipment,” she said.

“The virus has caught everyone off guard (but) over the three years we have been open we've worked very hard to build a community environment and not just a gym, where members have reached out to support us through this tough time.”



It could be months before F45 gyms are allowed to return to their normal capacity. Picture: Supplied



iGym 24/7 Carrum Downs members have been sweating it out through virtual training classes.

iGym 24/7 Carrum Downs human resources manager Kyle Minett said they would stick to already stringent sanitation rules for equipment and members once they could reopen.

“Our hygiene standards were already great before the coronavirus, and all of our staff have now done the infectious disease module,” he said.

“We will wait and abide by whatever rules the State Government pushes out.”

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