

Dear

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We will have the inequitable position of large social gatherings of up to 50 people, bars open with up to 50 people drinking without masks, close contact businesses such as hairdressers operating, but exercise venues with mandated 2 metres distancing & strict mask protocols for staff unable to open.

In the past, gyms (and yoga studios and dance studios) have been grouped with other public venues such as pools, and we would strongly suggest that this is considered, both for the viability of Auckland exercise businesses, but just as importantly, for the public health of Aucklanders.

Some important information for you so that you can come to an informed view on this matter:

1. Gyms are not a source of Covid-19 transmission

Official UK research through to August this year shows that for every 100,000 visits to UK health clubs only 1 person will go on to test positive for Covid-19. www.eanz.nz/UKSTAT

This was in an environment where there was large scale community Covid-19 Delta, as well as low vaccination rates, showing that exercise facilities can operate with background virus, but not be a significant source of transmission.

2. Exercise facilities are crucial to the physical and mental health of New Zealanders

Over 250,000 adults rely on exercise facilities as their main form of exercise in Auckland, and through the first lockdown New Zealanders put on weight at 10 times the normal rate from June 2020 to June 2021 www.eanz.nz/weightgain. This is catastrophic for our physical and mental health (see Costs of Physical Inactivity - www.eanz.nz/inactivitycosts. \$1.3b nationally in 2010).

3. We are part of protecting the public against hospitalisation and death from Covid-19

British Medical Journal research www.eanz.nz/BMJ showed that those who do not exercise had a 226% increase in hospitalisation from Covid-19 and a death rate increase of 249%. A direct quote "In fact, physical inactivity was the strongest risk factor across all outcomes, compared with the commonly cited modifiable risk factors, including smoking, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease and cancer." Keeping exercise facilities closed means an activity that can reduce deaths by 250% is being side-lined.

If exercise was a drug it would be made a compulsory (and funded) prevention tool!

4. We have proven we can stick to the rules

The New Zealand exercise industry tracks every visit (we have inbuilt contact tracing through swipe cards and fobs), and has taken stringent measures to prevent transmission. We believe we have the only framework in which the industry self imposes significantly more than what MoH have recommended at Level 2: www.exercisenz.org.nz/framework. Our industry continues to update the framework to reflect the latest evidence and have this re-tested by against the delta variant and are happy to work with MoH on any suggested changes to our industry's rules to allow exercise facilities to open, and the public to stay safe.

Exercise New Zealand (www.exercisenz.org.nz) represents our industry, and developed our Covid-19 framework, so they can be spoken to for more details on this. ExerciseNZ also has the support of Yoga New Zealand, and Dance Aotearoa.

I ask that you urgently speak to other party members, including your party leader, and any spokespeople on Covid-19 related matters. We urge you to also ask questions in the house, challenging the government as to why they are not following science, so that we can open as a part of the staged reopening of Auckland, and we can do so in a way that both keeps kiwis safe, and receiving all the protective benefits of exercise.

Best regards

Your name