

Cockburn Gazette

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Time to pay the piper

Gyms face the music over fees

By NICOLE STEVENS

LISTENING to the latest high energy tunes while working up a sweat in your favourite spin, pump or aqua aerobics class is about to become a thing of the past.

Cockburn gyms and leisure centres could resort to playing cover versions of popular songs, after the Copyright Tribunal ruled the fitness industry has to pay up to 1500 per cent more for licensed music.

The decision means that while gyms were paying 96.8 cents a class, they will now have to pay \$15 a class.

South Lake Leisure Centre said the fee increase would affect about 60 classes a week, adding an extra \$45,000 to \$50,000 to its costs per year.

City of Cockburn director of community services Don Green said the industry had developed contingency plans to avoid the charge, including the production of unlicensed music.

"The simple goal of this contingency is to allow health clubs to keep their fees down at an affordable level, rather than simply passing the PPCA increase straight on to the patrons," he

said. "When the time comes, we should be able switch to the unlicensed music without too much trouble and without increasing our fees."

The Phonographic Performance Company of Australia (PPCA), which called for the increase, said it would force "profit-driven operators" to pay fair value for music that was "widely used in fitness classes to attract and motivate participants".

PPCA chief executive Stephen Peach said he believed fitness centres that continued to use real music would have a strong business advantage over those that took "a very short-sighted decision to switch to low-quality cover versions".

But Mr Green said it was likely tracks produced specifically for group fitness classes would be even better than popular music.

"The perception is that this music would not be as effective as licensed music," he said.

"However, it can be produced with the specific intent to run group fitness classes, concentrating on appropriate beat patterns, and therefore possibly be more effective for this purpose."

The beat goes on for South Lake Leisure Centre fitness co-ordinator Rebecca O'Donnell. Picture: Martin Kennealey 0333770

