

18<sup>th</sup> February 2014



## **Exercise Association of New Zealand's position on exercise providers' use of public parks**

Recently the Exercise Association of New Zealand (ExerciseNZ) has been approached by a number of Personal Trainers (PTs) who use parks in Wellington to train clients or groups. Some have been asked by the council to pay and/or book when using a park.

ExerciseNZ was aware of this being a potential issue for some time, so was proactive, and has made submissions to, and had meetings with, both the Auckland and Wellington councils on exercise providers use of public parks.

### **Wellington**

Firstly, to confirm Wellington City Council's current policy – they are only charging, and requiring trainers to book, parks that also contain sports fields. They are also treating any booking the same as they do for sports teams.

Wellington City Council is developing a more comprehensive policy around the use of parks for exercise, and ExerciseNZ will be in discussions with the council both before this policy is released, and after the draft is made public for submissions to ensure that the policy is both fair and equitable.

### **Parks in general**

ExerciseNZ's position is that we support an approach that manages the use of parks to ensure they are accessible to all, which includes the use of parks by exercise providers, such as PTs. Any policy should allow for the use of parks by exercise providers, but do so in a way that ensures that the park is still accessible and usable by others. We recommend councils develop a clear policy on this topic. This is similar to managing a BBQ area in a park when a large employer wants to host their annual Christmas function.

Council's policies on this may or may not include a requirement of a small fee/administration payment by exercise providers, and/or a booking system (for busy or small parks). We strongly recommend that councils have clear criteria before a trainer can operate out of a public park. This criteria should include being registered with the NZ Register of Exercise Professionals (REPs) (which, amongst other things, ensures the trainer has up to date first aid and public liability insurance).

We understand the many benefits of structured exercise, including the wider benefits to society through lower health costs, and increased productivity. However, this does not give an exercise provider an automatic right to operate their business in a park on a regular basis, in a way that is detrimental to other park users (this includes claiming park space as 'exclusive' in some way, even for a limited time). Not only must councils balance these multiple competing needs, but also manage the increasing demand for park use by exercise providers so that no one person or company receives preferential treatment in their use of a park (there have been cases where more than one trainer was trying to use the same part of a park at the same time).

We wish to work proactively, and co-operatively with councils on this issue, and will offer to support any council developing a policy on use of parks by exercise providers.

For more information, contact [info@exercisenz.org.nz](mailto:info@exercisenz.org.nz) or visit [www.exercisenz.org.nz](http://www.exercisenz.org.nz) for more info on the role of the Exercise Association of New Zealand.