

[Bulletin Home](#) > [Supplements](#) > [Stories](#)

Popularity poles

15/08/2006

By Cameron Cooper

The next big thing in female fitness could well be pole-dancing. Cameron Cooper reports.

Women's health and fitness trends have gone through a few celebrated phases -- aerobics, yoga, pilates ... and now pole-dancing.

At least, that is the hope of Kennetta Hutchens, the founder of Pole Divas, a Melbourne-based business that aims to take pole-dancing across Australia and New Zealand through a franchise model.

With more than a decade of experience in the adult industry, Hutchens says few physical activities can match pole-dancing for a full body workout. It combines the techniques of gymnastics, yoga and dance while adding a touch of sensuality with typical strip moves.

A rush of inquiries from people wanting a studio in their area convinced her to expand. "I just took a bit of a punt really," says Hutchens, who opened her first franchise in Mornington a few months ago to complement her headquarters in Prahran. "Women are looking for alternative exercise regimes because perhaps they are a bit bored and they want to spice it up a bit."

Accepting only female clients and with nudity not allowed in classes, Pole Divas is entering the space of the female-friendly exercise market that has been cornered by gym franchises such as Fernwood and Curves.

Including set-up fees and fitout costs, a Pole Divas franchise is likely to cost between \$60,000 and \$100,000. Hutchens already has hundreds of students, and says many are eager to open their own franchise.

She admits many first-time students are scared of pole dancing, but quickly become obsessed. "Some people find it daunting to go to the gym let alone to come to a pole-dancing class. There's a lot of very nervous people when they first come in there."

The business is not designed as a training ground for professional strippers, with Hutchens saying 95% of students are "your everyday woman". The main clientele consists of women who want to get fit, while hens' parties looking for something different to do are a big crowd-puller.

Hutchens does not shy away from pole-dancing's link to the adult industry. "I embrace the history of what this is all about. I don't want to lose that at all ... I think that's what makes it a little bit exciting and a little bit naughty."

Material in The Bulletin is protected under the Commonwealth Copyright Act 1968. No material may be reproduced in part or in whole without written consent from the copyright holders.