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## **lululemon to launch first Australian 'sweat shop' concept store in Bondi**

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Activewear is the new iron ore, and Bondi is the new Pilbara.

The dramatic growth of fitness inspired fashion has surprised the local Chamber of Commerce.

"Ten years ago there weren't any cafes in Bondi, now it's renowned for its cafe culture and is an iconic hub for a fit and healthy lifestyle," president Anne Marie Cronin said.

According to Roy Morgan research more than 1.6 million Australian adults purchase exercise attire every month, up from 1.3 million in 2011.

The value of the sportswear market has also increased. Australians spent \$1.1 billion on sportswear between October 2010 and September 2011. As of September this year, they had already outlaid about \$1.5 billion.

To capitalise on this boom, lululemon - the Canadian company famous for its yoga pants - will open its first concept store in the southern hemisphere, just a stones throw from Australia's most iconic beach.

The space will be part retail and part community hub, like a fitness-focused RSL where the only brews served are kombucha and sparkling water on tap at the label's first Australian "hydration station".

"It will take the traditional retail store and turn it into a connection point for the Bondi Beach community," the company's Australian and New Zealand vice-president Kyle Housman told Fairfax Media.

The initiative, lululemon Found In: Bondi, will be the sixth of its kind for lululemon and the first outside of North America.

Like Sydney during the summer months, the store, located on Campbell Parade, will be focused on "sweat, sweaty opportunists and the water-obsessed", Housman said. As well as selling a curated collection of the brand's leggings and swim wear, the "incubator" will conduct public activities that work on customers "personal development and relationships".

"Bondi is packed from 6am every morning. We'll aim to offer things like a running club on the sand, swimming at Icebergs and yoga at the store. The space, the people and the location lends itself to this type of retail concept," Australian and New Zealand brand and community director Ben Jackson said.

The brand has a close affiliation with Australian surf. Swimwear design director Clare Robertson was born and raised in Sydney and according to Housman and Jackson, lululemon's chief executive Laurent Potdevin "is a huge fan of the swell off Bondi, so don't be surprised if he comes out to visit more often."

The 125 sq m store will be housed inside The Pacific, a development by Rebel Property Group's Allen Linz and Capit.el Group's Eduard Litver.

"We started scouting for a place in early winter and looked at a few options around the coast, including Manly, but the proximity to the beach in Bondi was a key selling point," Housman said. "We worked really closely with the developers who were really keen to have us there."

Bricks and mortar ath-leisure stores are becoming more prominent than cold-pressed juice jars in the seaside suburb. This week local sports lifestyle brand, First Base, will open a concept store in the same precinct, while Australian label Nimble Activewear opened its first store up the road on Hall Street in February. lululemon Found In: Bondi will launch in the coming weeks.

*This story was found at: <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/fashion/lululemon-to-launch-first-australian-sweat-shop-concept-store-in-bondi-20161205-gt4359.html>*