

Women raise the bar for maternity ward

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Nicole Rafter, Wyatt Howarth, 6 months, and mum Carly at Contours Gym. Picture: SIMON COCKSEGE ~PP402108

MONA Vale business owners Nicole Rafter and Carly Howarth are throwing their support behind an important community issue.

As co-owners of Contours, an all-female gym, the women are campaigning to reopen the maternity ward at Mona Vale Hospital.

"Closing the maternity unit at Mona Vale Hospital is an issue that affects mums, both now and in the future. If local businesses don't support the issue, no one will take it seriously," Ms Rafter said.

"We are a female-only fitness studio and 80 per cent of our members are mums.

"Carly Howarth, my business partner and co-owner of Contours, was directly affected by this when she had her baby, which is why we are pooling our resources."

The women are working in conjunction with the Mona Vale Hospital Auxiliary to get the message across, targeting the northern part of the peninsula with promotional banners, posters and a petition.

During August and September, Contours will be donating all the new members' joining fees to the campaign.

"When new members sign up to the gym, we will be donating all the proceeds right up to the end of September," Ms Rafter said.

Contours' campaign has been supported by Liberal MP for Pittwater Rob Stokes and local businesses, Ms Rafter said.

"We met Rob Stokes last week, he has helped us with our petition. Four Mona Vale businesses - Little Paper Lane, Ecrú Hair Studio, Blossoms in Bloom and Mint Condition - have taken a copy for people to sign. We now have more than 500 signatures," she said.

On Friday, they will take their initiative to Newport and Avalon.