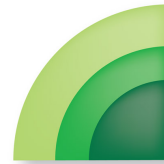




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Wellness chain starts bold national expansion program

KATE EMERY

Atos Wellness chairman Ananda Rajah has unveiled ambitious plans to open up to 12 health-care centres in five years, six weeks after stepping into the top job at the Perth health-care junior.

The Singapore businessman said yesterday the group would form a new joint venture with Perth-based private company Sol Health to establish up to 12 "wellness centres" in Australia, including five in WA, with a view to lifting Atos' Australian revenue from \$2 million a year to \$10 million by 2012.

Mr Rajah said he was confident the group would ultimately replicate its success in Singapore, where it runs eight centres and three beauty clinics with revenue of about \$20

million. The move comes nearly three months after the Salter Point-based company, formerly known as Medec, merged with Singapore-based Atos Wellness in what was essentially a backdoor listing for Atos.

It is also less than two months after Mr Rajah, who founded the Singapore group, took over as chief executive.

Mr Rajah said the joint venture, known as Atos Sol Wellness, had already secured sites in Mandurah and Wanneroo and was in negotiations over three more sites in Perth area. It is also targeting Queensland and South Australia.

"Wellness is a substantial business and Atos is rolling out reliable high-quality services positioning itself as the leader and Australia's only listed

wellness company," he said. "The locations are the fastest growing communities in Australia."

The centres will follow the model of Atos' Inspire Life Centre in Bentley, which includes a swimming pool, gym, day spa and physiotherapy services. Under the deal, Sol will manage the day-to-day operations of the 50-50 joint venture while Atos provides staff recruitment and training.

Sol managing director Dean Solly said there was "massive" demand for multi-functional health-care centres in WA and interstate.

"We are under extremely positive pressure ... from Perth to Brisbane and everything in between," he said.

He said construction on the Wanneroo and Mandurah sites was expected within five months.



Role model: The Inspire Life centre, Bentley, on which the new centres will be based. Picture: Barry Baker