Media Release

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COLES COMMUNITY ROUND BRINGS GOLD MEDAL INSPIRATION TO GRASSROOTS LITTLE ATHLETICS

LINK TO PHOTOS HERE

Olympic Champions Nina Kennedy and Sally Pearson headline 22 Australian track and field stars who will be visiting grassroots Little Athletics Centres across the country over the next two weeks to inspire the next generation of Aussie athletes for Coles Community Round.

A record 344 Little Athletics Centres will take part in this year's Coles Community Round which runs nationally from Wednesday 4 November until Tuesday 17 November. The annual round is a celebration of Coles' 9-year partnership with Little Athletics, which includes banana donations, equipment grants and connecting little athletes with their sporting heroes.

The ambassador appearances come less than three months since former little athletes dominated the 2026 Commonwealth Games, picking up 25 of Australia's 34 medals. Two gold medallists, Matt Denny and Isaac Beacroft will be participating in Coles Community Round, with Isaac visiting his former Little Athletics Centre, Quakers Hill. They will be joined by former World Champions Kelsey-Lee Barber and Jaryd Clifford and Olympians Brandon Starc, Sarah Carli, Cam McEntyre, Ella Connolly and Stephanie Ratcliffe.

In addition to sharing training tips and encouraging healthy eating, the Coles and Little Athletics ambassadors will also help present new equipment to successful centres from the latest round of Coles Little Athletics Community Fund grants, which last month surpassed $3 million in funding.

Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Kelsey-Lee Barber will make her first appearance after giving birth less than eight months ago. Now back in training with her sights set firmly on a fourth Olympic Games, the dual World Champion is looking forward to visiting local centres in Brisbane and the Sunshine Coast.

"I'm so excited to meet the future of Australian Athletics, and hopefully inspire them to dream big, have a go and discover what they love about our sport," she said.

"That's why Coles Community Round is so important. It brings elite athletes to local communities, where a little encouragement can mean so much. It's a chance to celebrate having fun, healthy eating and trying something new. If sharing my experiences helps a child feel more confident to pursue athletics, that's something really special."

Coles Little Athletics CEO Myles Forman said the record participation and ambassador visits in this year's Coles Community Round highlighted the importance of Coles' ongoing support for grassroots athletics.

"Coles Community Round brings the partnership between Coles and Little Athletics to life. It connects little athletes with sporting heroes and local clubs and centres with Coles stores and team members – all helping inspire children to get active," he said.

"Since 2017, Coles has donated 7 million bananas and awarded $3 million in sports equipment grants. That support helps children build confidence and friendships and backs the families and volunteers who keep Little Athletics running."

For a full list of 2026 ambassador appearance dates and centres visit Australian Athletics website.

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For media enquiries, please contact
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About Coles ambassadors

- **Kelsey-Lee Barber** (javelin) is a two-time World Champion, 2020 Olympic bronze medallist and triple Commonwealth Games medallist;
- **Jaryd Clifford** (T12/13 middle/long distance) is a triple Paralympic medallist and two-time World Para-Athletics Champion and world record holder;
- **Matt Denny** (discus) is the 2024 Olympic bronze medalist, two-time Commonwealth Games Champion and Australian record holder;
- **Nina Kennedy** (pole vault) is the reigning Olympic Champion, 2023 World Champion and Australian record holder. Nina was Australia's flag bearer at the 2026 Commonwealth Games opening ceremony;
- **Sally Pearson** (100m hurdles) is the 2012 Olympic Champion, 2008 Olympic silver medallist, three-time World Champion (2 x outdoor, 1 x indoor) and Sport Australia Hall of Fame inductee;
- **Brandon Starc** (high jump) is a three-time Olympian, Commonwealth Games gold (2018) and silver (2022) medallist and Australian record holder.

About Little Athletics ambassadors

- **Isaac Beacroft** (race walking) is the reigning 2026 Commonwealth Games and World Under 20 Champion;
- **Sarah Carli** (400m hurdles) is a two-time Olympian and finished sixth at the 2026 Commonwealth Games;
- **Ella Connolly** (sprints) competed at the Paris Olympics and is a World Championships representative;
- **Cameron McEntyre** (javelin) competed at the Paris Olympics and is a World Championships finalist;
- **Stephanie Ratcliffe** (hammer throw) competed at the Paris Olympics and finished seventh at the 2026 Commonwealth Games;
- Full list of ambassador profiles is available here.