

# Media Release

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## **WORLD CHAMPIONS URGE KIDS TO GET ON TRACK WITH LITTLE ATHLETICS** *Coles extends partnerships with Athletics peak bodies to get kids into sport*

Australia's top athletes including Sally Pearson and World Champion Kelsey-Lee Barber have urged kids to dust off their running shoes and get back on the track this summer.

The call comes as Coles signed new partnership agreements with Little Athletics Australia and Athletics Australia to provide financial support to build grassroots athletics across the country at more than 500 Little Athletics centres, in schools and with Indigenous and para-athletes.

Olympic Champion Sally Pearson was joined by 2019 World Champions Kelsey-Lee Barber and Jaryd Clifford and Commonwealth Games silver medallist Matthew Denny at Runaway Bay Little Athletics Centre in Queensland to make the announcement.

Sally, Kelsey-Lee, Jaryd and Matthew called on kids across Australia to get active and join up for Little Athletics as COVID-19 restrictions ease in time for the summer season.

Sally Pearson, who started her illustrious career at Little Athletics on the Gold Coast, said she was delighted to continue supporting the next generation of Aussie athletes despite retiring from international competition last year to give birth to daughter Ruby.

"I'm so glad to continue my involvement with athletics through Coles' partnership with Little Athletics Australia. Little Athletics is where it all began for me, so I know how important grassroots centres and volunteers are to helping kids realise their potential," she said.

Coles CEO Steven Cain said the Athletics partnerships embodies Coles' purpose to help Australians lead healthier, happier lives.

"We're extremely excited to help Aussie athletes across the country to pursue their personal bests whether that's at their local Little Athletics centre or on the international stage. We know it's been a challenging time for everyone involved in sport and we're pleased to play our part to assist local clubs and Aussie champions alike," he said.

Research by the Australian Sports Foundation in July suggested that more than 16,000 local sports clubs were at risk of closing due to reduced revenues and increased costs arising from COVID-19<sup>[1]</sup>.

Little Athletics Australia CEO Martin Stillman said the Coles' partnership provided welcome relief at an uncertain time for grassroots sports clubs.

"Coles has been a wonderful supporter of Little Athletics since our partnership began in 2017. Their support at the grassroots level through fruit donations and equipment grants is where it's been the most impactful and we're delighted to have them on board for another two years," he said.

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[1] "Impact of COVID-19 on Community Sport," Australian Sports Foundation, July 2020

Athletics Australia CEO Darren Gocher welcomed Coles' ongoing support for its athletes, coaches and community programs.

"We are thrilled to have Coles continue as our Community Partner. Together, through programs such as Sporting Schools, Raise the Bar Indigenous Academy and Coles Little Athletes Big Dreams, we are ensuring Australians are leading healthier and more active lives," he said.

Coles has provided more than \$1.68 million in grants for sports equipment to 376 Little Athletics centres and more than 3 million bananas to give athletes a nutritious snack during training and competitions since 2017.



*World Athletics Champions Sally Pearson (left) and Kelsey-Lee Barber (right) supporting Runaway Bay Little Athletes Boston and Tyler*

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**For further information, please contact**

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