

ATHLETICS

# Forget social media, here's social sport

Michael Gleeson

Screens are a bigger threat to females taking up athletics than the impact of the enormous success of the Matildas at the World Cup and the growing popularity of AFLW, according to incoming Athletics Australia (AA) president Jane Flemming.

Flemming, an Olympian and two-time Commonwealth gold medallist, also said she felt enormous empathy for Peter Bol and remained outraged at his treatment by doping authorities in which he was banned for a positive drug test for EPO, only for the suspension to be lifted and the positive result overturned from a second test.

"What he has been through is horrendous and we are working towards making sure that never happens again to any athlete under our jurisdiction. God forbid anyone had to go through what Peter went through," Flemming said.

An inquiry by Sport Integrity Australia into what happened in the Bol case is ongoing, while World Anti-Doping Agency is reinvestigating testing methods for EPO.

Flemming, who was recently appointed AA president, said athletics was the most gender-neutral sport in the world and, with the Olympics, had a competitive edge on other sports.

"I think the biggest threat to female sport is a screen, it isn't the Matildas or the football codes," Flemming said.

"Athletics is a social sport and, in particular for females, they are hard-wired to be social and that is why the social aspect of athletics is so important. And then there is the Olympics, as well.

"We don't have women's athletics, we have athletics. We have always participated at the same place [as men], at the same time, for the same prize money. Athletics has always been gender-neutral.

"A teenager trains at the same time at the same venue as adults, men and



As Athletics Australia president, Jane Flemming hopes to promote stars such as pole vaulter Nina Kennedy. Photos: Joe Armao, Getty

women. It is a social sport. It is quite different to other sports that they only train and compete with girls or with boys. We do all of that together and it is a very social sport.

"Swimming is one of the only other sports like that and I think that is a real advantage for us."

The money in professional sports, most notably the football codes, cricket and tennis, has been a primary reason many elite male athletes over the years have been lost to athletics.

"You have to be careful what currency you are going to measure your life in. Despite the fact those other sports might offer other assets or interests, athletics has got the Olympics, and nearly every male I ever competed with, particularly from the southern states, at some point was

tapped on the shoulder by an AFL club. And their answer was: 'But I want to go to the Olympics.' It is a huge advantage we have," she said.

Flemming was eager for her sport to embrace change in how it presented itself and was excited about opportunities to showcase it in innovative ways, such as when Australia's world-champion pole vaulter Nina Kennedy won a Diamond League meet staged in a Zurich train station earlier this year.

"We have Nina and Kurtis Marschall in Perth; imagine us being able to put a

temporary runway down the mall in Perth and have a pole vault competition there, or a shot put competition in the middle of Martin Place - because that is what they do in Zurich, they run shot put in the main street of the city," she said.

To that end, tonight at the Zatopek:10 meet in Melbourne there will be a footbridge over the track where spectators can watch the runners race underneath them, or walk into the field inside the track and watch the race just centimetres from the athletes as they race past. Music from popular electronic act Peking Duk will be playing as the athletes compete.

There will also be mixed relay and team events, making for a more entertaining night than a typical athletics meet.

The successful Maurie Plant meet in Melbourne this year, which featured the world's fastest man Fred Kerley and was delivered in a high-energy, exciting format, was a window to how athletics could better deliver a meet.

"We got that formula quite right. The low-hanging fruit for us are the people who have already loved the sport but had not been engaged recently - so we didn't have to sell them on the sport, we just had to activate them - and there are heaps of those around Australia," Flemming said.

"I sat next to [horse trainer] David Hayes at the races one day and he was telling me he was a triple jumper for South Australia.

[Seven West Media chairman] Kerry Stokes used to run for Coburg Athletics, the same club as Raelene Boyle. Melissa Babbage, Joe Hockey's wife, was a national finalist in the 400m.

"There are people all over that we need to activate. They all still love it but don't engage with it."





**Suicide Prevention**  
Increasing Emotional Awareness  
in Whole Communities

**100,000 Aussie Suicides**

Scan QR code to my website with a graph plotting 43 years of data showing Aussie Road Deaths v Suicides.

Road Deaths have fallen dramatically from 9 per day to 3. Meanwhile suicides have increased from 4.5 per day to 9!

On election night PM Albanese said, "Australia can reach for the stars."

We have the potential to pioneer a bold and innovative pathway to increase emotional wealth, health, intelligence and happiness on a national scale to reduce suicides like we did for road deaths.

This site is dedicated to community information, education, and research.

It is not a help site.

[www.suicidepreventionads.com](http://www.suicidepreventionads.com)

I feel passionately about suicide prevention and am looking for a sponsor for a series of monthly ads to raise awareness and reduce suicides. More information is on the site.

**MY DREAM**  
**Is to Reduce Aussie Suicides**

Written and authorised by Tim Barritt,  
146 Trial Hill Rd, Pewsey Vale, SA 5351

## Police seize \$200,000 from Nassif mansion

Jordan Baker  
Kate McClymont

Police seized cash worth more than \$200,000 when they raided the waterfront mansion of fugitive developer Jean Nassif, which his estranged wife is trying to claim.

The Crime Commission this week issued a forfeiture notice for \$190,000 and almost \$10,000 worth of US bills found during a search of the Nassifs' Chiswick home in late February.

The property was among four raided by police, leading to the arrest of Nassif's daughter Ashlyn on charges relating to allegations she created \$10.5 million worth of false or misleading pre-sales contracts to secure a \$150 million bank loan.

In June, a warrant was issued for the arrest of Nassif in relation to the same alleged scam.

He has been overseas for almost a year, believed to be moving between Lebanon and South-East Asia, as his property empire has collapsed with debts of more than a billion dollars, leaving thousands of



Jean Nassif and his Chiswick home. Photo: Kate Geraghty

buyers, tradies and employers out of pocket. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Police did not disclose what they seized in the raids but the commission's forfeiture notice, published this week, says they seized \$190,000 in Australian currency and \$9634 in US currency on February 28.

The money remains in police custody because it relates to an investigation.

The public notice - required by law - said the commission was satisfied it either belonged to a person suspected of engaging in serious criminal activity, or was suspected of being de-

rived from or related to a serious crime.

It called for anyone who disputed that to come forward with evidence that it was theirs and prove it was legally obtained.

Nassif's estranged wife Nisserine (known as Nissy) has already lodged a legal bid for the cash. Her matter will return to Parramatta Local Court on December 14, two days after the matter of Ashlyn, Nassif's daughter from a former marriage, is next mentioned.

Nassif shot to fame on Valentine's Day 2019 when he posted on social media his gift to Nissy of a canary-yellow Lamborghini

accompanied by Nassif famously saying, "Congratulations, Mrs Nassif. You like?" The car has since been repossessed.

In September 2019, Nassif was arrested with a bag of cocaine at Nissy's 32nd birthday party at Star casino. He entered a guilty plea and received an 18-month corrections order.

In July last year, domestic violence charges against Nassif were dropped after Nissy, who said she was in Lebanon, failed to turn up to court. The police statement of facts alleged she was "scared for her life" and Nassif had slapped her face and dragged her around their house.

For months, the feuding couple have been trading insults on social media. Nassif recently posted, "Some kids are fatherless because their mother wants to keep them blind from the truth. So they don't see her evil side of the story."

Nissy, who has reverted to her maiden name Matta, responded by accusing Nassif of "physically, emotionally and financially" abusing his family and of abandoning them with no support.