



Any time for It's no,



**NEIL
KEARNEY**
on Saturday

A big party would be among the highlights for most girls turning 17. But not if you are reaching for the top in world gymnastics

MONETTE Russo is having a party tonight to celebrate turning 17 two days ago. Gate-crashers need not bother.

The most a party animal could hope for is a slither of blueberry, low-fat muffin, which "Netty" and five of her gymnast girlfriends will pick at before they bunk down for a sleepover.

Most 17-year-olds would say that they have outgrown sleepovers — but female gymnasts aren't supposed to grow.

Their lives are suspended between child-like innocence and a discipline demanding more commitment and single-mindedness than any other sport.

For Monette, sleeping in tomorrow morning will be a treat. Most days she jumps out of bed at 5.30.

While she is sheltered from many of the attractions, distractions and, some would argue, realities of teenage life, her sport rules that she must stand up in pressure situations that require exceptional maturity.

Hers is a very public arena where the objective is perfection, where excellence is measured in fractions, and a stumble means failure.

The baby of the Australian team at last year's Olympics — she turned 16 in Athens — Monette was forced to carry a shin stress fracture into the competition.

She fell once from the beam and twice from the parallel bars.

According to her mother, returning to the gym after she came home was the toughest thing Monette has had to do.

"It's the only time she has taken a while to get back into it," Connie Russo says.

Falling in Athens, Monette explains, made her stronger.

"It taught me to push through harder," she says.

Over the next seven months, Monette will have no time for contemplation.

In 107 days she will carry Australian expectations into Rod Laver Arena at the world gymnastics championships, the first time the titles have come to this country.

At what point will you become 'part of the action' to create a sustainable water future?



Australia's water future is under threat. While we have been lulled into a false sense of security, our current water usage remains simply unsustainable.

Are you prepared to make change happen?

Unless we alter our perspective and behaviour on water — and soon — the impact on our lifestyles, cities, agriculture and industry will be devastating. Watermark Australia is a community-based initiative, instigated by the Victorian Women's Trust. We have created the public space for ordinary people to enter the discussion about our water future, bringing together thousands of people who want to make a difference. Change can happen, as it has with road safety and smoking, but it will take much more than water saving.

Let's not bankrupt the water future for our grandchildren

For the sake of future generations, concerned individuals need to get involved by becoming 'part of the Watermark Australia action'. You with others can input your experience and ideas, learn new facts about water and get your head around the issues.

To talk to a member of our project team, call 03 9642 0422 (BH) or 1300 739 756 (outside Melbourne). Alternatively, visit us at www.watermarkaustralia.org.au or email us at enquiries@watermarkaustralia.org.au

watermark
AUSTRALIA