

FOCUS

Matchmaker to the jet set

A new dating service for Australia's wealthiest singles claims to be able to match them with their perfect partners. CATHERINE LAMBERT reports

SINGLE men and women can take some comfort that even the rich and famous struggle to find their soul mate.

The difficulty multi-millionaires face in finding true love is the subject of top-rating US FoxTel show *Millionaire Matchmaker*, starring Patti Stanger.

Now Australia has a dedicated matchmaker for high-achievers. Trudy Gilbert, 36, set up Elite Introductions four years ago for a select clientele.

The annual average salary of her 1800 clients in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane is \$400,000.

"I read an article about a woman in New York who was matchmaking high society and I thought it seemed like a new need," Ms Gilbert said.

"It seemed that online has had its day and a lot of people want, and need, to maintain their confidentiality and privacy. When I was young it was OK to meet someone in a bar, but it's not common these days. So I set up the agency."

Her core market consists of senior management entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors and old school professionals. Some of the clients whose names she can reveal include Tanya Du Plessis, who manages the Hope Island Marina at Sanctuary Cove, and mining industry consultant Tony Sambell. Others include the owner of No Red Herring, Ashley Goode, and Matthew Brown, who runs Zinc Financial.

No member smokes. Most are svelte. None is obese.

"Most of our members run marathons or triathlons so they want to meet their equal — that will be someone who is athletic with aligned energy levels," Ms Gilbert said.

"Of all the components that bring two people together, energy levels is very important, along with aligned personalities in terms of interests, lifestyle, what you have experienced to date, your world values and your plans for the future."

"Then creating a connection is part of the work the two people have to do themselves. Once they know there is a commonality in interests, they can just concentrate on the connection element."

The average age of her clients is 38 for men and 34 for women. Most of the men, in particular, have been married before and have children.

Ms Gilbert encourages a reasonable age difference between the men and women.

"Our members are very realistic — they don't want to meet someone who is more than 15 years younger, but I do believe there should be an age difference," she said.

"There should be a five-to-10-year gap with the man being older because men mature emotionally at a slower rate than women."

For the most part, though, the members want to meet an equal life partner. They have run out of single friends and are not attracted to online dating sites such as RSVP.

"They don't know where to go any more," she said. "They see us as a type of recruitment agency. It's an effective way to search for the right person."

"They are highly spirited, optimistic people who are creative in their approach to life and its solutions. They

MOST ELIGIBLE SINGLES



Justin Hemmes,
hotel mogul



Jennifer Aniston,
actor



Sam Branson, son of
Sir Richard



Lara Bingle,
model



Dietrich Mateschitz,
Red Bull co-founder



Kim Kardashian,
reality TV star



Rafael Nadal, tennis
player



Stephanie Rice,
swimmer



Greg Norman,
golfer



Meg Whitman,
former eBay CEO

want to be with someone who embodies the attributes they need."

Ms Gilbert said 92 per cent of her members wanted to see their first date again and the average length of their first date was 4½ hours. About 70 per cent of members ended up in a long-term relationship.

"No one would pay the \$4995 fee to come on board if they were not interested in long-term," she said.

The blue-chip fee includes unlimited dates within a 12-month period along with styling sessions and advice on attracting the opposite sex.



Making connections:
Trudy Gilbert of Elite Introductions.