

THE BIG ISSUE AUSTRALIA COMMUNITY STREET SOCCER PROGRAM GENERAL INFORMATION



The Big Issue Australia

The Big Issue Australia is an independent organisation that develops and operates social enterprises and creative, sustainable solutions to homelessness; providing opportunities for homeless and marginalised people to positively change their lives.

We are an agent for social change, using entrepreneurial practices and sound business strategy to promote social inclusion and alleviate poverty in Australia. Our innovative programs and services focus on helping people who are socially disadvantaged, and may otherwise slip through the cracks, to build confidence and the capacity to help themselves.

Community Street Soccer Program

The Community Street Soccer Program, known as Street Soccer, is an initiative of The Big Issue Australia. The program uses the power of sport to promote social inclusion and personal change for homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged people. It changes lives and creates healthier communities across Australia.

Street Soccer involves males and females, from 16 years age, with all abilities getting together once a week for soccer activities and matches. Permanent pitches, equipment and a dedicated soccer Coach are provided at each location.

Street Soccer training runs 52 weeks a year and provides week-in week-out consistent activity for people whose lives can be very inconsistent.

Support staff work closely with players, linking them to services that address their individual issues and needs.

Street Soccer puts the person at the centre of the solution and provides them with the support and tools necessary to help themselves make positive change.

Where does Street Soccer operate?

The program is on target to engage 3,000 participants in 30 sites across Australia by the end of 2010, including specialist programs for women, indigenous communities, refugees and in correctional facilities.

Street Soccer sites now run week-in week-out nationally in Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney, Canberra, Ballarat, Geelong, Shepparton, Broadmeadows, Morwell, Dandenong, Bendigo, Port Adelaide, Townsville, Perth, Wollongong and Darwin.

Sites planned for 2009 and 2010 include Alice Springs, Mildura, Hobart, Gold Coast, Port Hedland, Port Augusta, Bunbury, Ceduna, Newcastle, Parramatta, Launceston, Cooktown and Kimberley.

Who participates in Street Soccer?

Street Soccer players come from many walks of life, but all have been marginalised in some way. This could be through factors such as mental illness, homelessness, refugee status, drug and alcohol dependency, physical disability, long-term unemployment or family breakdown.

Participants come through referrals from hostels and boarding houses, community centres and welfare agencies, and word-of-mouth among existing Street Soccer participants.



"Some people don't understand when I try to explain how important soccer is to me, but it has dead set helped me change my life"
- Stevie, Street Soccer participant

A community initiative of The Big Issue.



What happens at weekly Street Soccer training?

Weekly training sessions are fun, safe and friendly. The Coach will coordinate a Street Soccer session that will incorporate some stretching, simple fitness work, skill work and a fun match.

There is a great sense of enjoyment and camaraderie at the sessions amongst everyone and the Coach is encouraging and supportive. There are a lot of smiles and lots of laughter and social interaction between players, coaches and volunteers.

Each program works with a number of organisations and groups in some way to ensure the program's success.

Workers from community organisations come down and have a kick with the team, local businesses support the programs by providing free fruit, BBQs, bakery items etc... after training for the players and volunteers help by cutting up oranges, assisting with coaching or even playing with the squad.

In some programs students from various educational institutions come to training and provide first aid, massage and general support.

Street Soccer special events...

Events at Weekly Training - every four to six weeks Street Soccer will host a special event designed to increase community involvement and education, which may include corporate challenge matches, school matches and events with community groups.

State Camps - Two-Day Camp & Competition for players within each State is conducted for selected individuals to demonstrate their commitment and determination at weekly training.

National Championships - Two-Day Camp & Championships for participants from programs around the country and

facilitates the selection of the Street Soccerroos, the team representing Australia at the Homeless World Cup.

Homeless World Cup - an annual international football tournament that brings together participants from Street Soccer programs around the world. In 2008 The Big Issue proudly hosted the Homeless World Cup in Melbourne that saw more than 50 teams world-wide 100,000 spectators descend on Federation Square for the week-long event.

In September 2009, our Street Soccerroos will compete at The Homeless World Cup in Milan, Italy.

How does it work?

Street Soccer engages people who have given up on counselling and traditional support systems and services.

Benefits for Street Soccer participants include:

- Social inclusion and improved links with the community
- Re-connection with family
- Improved confidence and self-esteem
- Improved mental health
- Improved health and fitness
- A sense of belonging
- Discipline
- Seeking support or advice
- Improving their housing situation
- Finding employment

Benefits for the community include:

- Improved community health and well-being
- A reduction in crime and a safer community
- A decline in alcohol and substance abuse
- Economic savings by diverting at-risk people from hospitals, courts, emergency and correctional services
- Increased public awareness of the plight of homeless and marginalised people



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