

MEDIA ALERT

30 May 2016



THE BIG ISSUE CELEBRATES 20 YEARS

THE Big Issue is celebrating 20 years of providing life-changing opportunities for homeless and disadvantaged Australians. During that time, 6500 men and women have earned \$23 million through sales of *The Big Issue* street magazine.

The Big Issue is marking its big milestone with the release of a special anniversary edition of the magazine on Friday, 3 June. Vendors and supporters will come together at breakfast events around the country to mark the occasion, while ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr and Lord Mayors in Adelaide, Brisbane, Darwin and Melbourne will hit the streets to sell the magazine alongside vendors.

A small group of vendors sold the first copies of *The Big Issue* in Melbourne on June 16, 1996. The social enterprise has since spread nationally, with more than 550 vendors working around the country today. Vendors buy copies for \$3.50 and sell them for \$7, keeping the difference.

The organisation has expanded to include five additional programs and enterprises alongside the popular street magazine, including a subscription service providing employment to vulnerable women and a soccer program for homeless and disadvantaged players. These allow The Big Issue to tackle different aspects of homelessness and marginalisation.

The Big Issue CEO Steven Persson said the organisation's 20-year track record showed the value of developing solutions to help people help themselves. "The Big Issue has given thousands of people the opportunity to earn an income and reconnect with the community over the past 20 years," Mr Persson said.

"The Australian community has embraced The Big Issue and its cause, with more than 10 million copies of the magazine sold in the past two decades. Our 20th anniversary is a good time to reflect on how far we've come and what we've achieved."

Vendors will receive new fluoro *Big Issue* vests as part of the celebrations, thanks to a new partnership with Bank Australia.

Bank Australia Managing Director Damien Walsh said: "It's inspiring to see the vendors working hard to improve their lives and we know the uniforms play a big role in developing the sense of identity and belonging that makes this possible. We're proud to be part of that."

For more information about The Big Issue and its achievements, please visit www.thebigissue.org.au.

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