

# MEDIA ALERT

8 JULY 2016



## STREET SOCCEROOS COMPETE AT HOMELESS WORLD CUP

A TEAM of homeless and disadvantaged soccer players is representing Australia on the world stage at the 2016 Homeless World Cup.

The Big Issue has selected seven players from its Community Street Soccer Program to compete alongside teams from 51 other nations at the tournament. The 14<sup>th</sup> annual event is being staged in Glasgow from 10-16 July.

The Australian team, known as the Street Soccerroos, is departing for Glasgow on 8 July and returning to Australia on 19 July. More than 500 homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged soccer players are expected to take part in the event.

The Big Issue CEO Steven Persson said the tournament used the universal language of soccer to break down barriers and promote community engagement for players from all walks of life.

“The Homeless World Cup is an opportunity for our Street Soccerroos to connect with homeless and disadvantaged men and women from around the world in the spirit of friendship, social inclusion and fair play. For some, this is also their first opportunity to travel outside Australia,” he said.

The Australian team was selected from hundreds of participants in The Big Issue’s Community Street Soccer Program – a national grassroots initiative that uses soccer to help participants reconnect with their community and make positive changes in their lives.

Research shows the program helps players improve their physical and mental health. A 2015 survey of participants found:

- 99 per cent reported improved physical fitness
- 96 per cent were motivated to improve or maintain their physical and mental health
- 95 per cent said they have a more positive outlook on life
- 90 per cent have learned about health issues
- 86 per cent said they eat healthier food.

The program has also proven effective at decreasing rates of smoking and substance abuse; with 58 per cent of players reporting reduced alcohol use and 47 per cent stopping or cutting back on smoking.

More than 7,000 participants have engaged with the Community Street Soccer Program since it launched in 2007. It now operates at 18 sites around Australia. For more information about the Community Street Soccer Program, visit [www.thebigissue.org.au](http://www.thebigissue.org.au)

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