

The Big Issue and Street Soccer

The Big Issue is a not-for profit organisation that publishes a magazine sold by marginalized or disadvantaged people known as 'vendors'. Originally founded in London in 1991, the Australian edition of the magazine was launched in Australia in 1996.

The magazine is a fortnightly independent publication which offers readers enjoyable features and photography. It is lively, a little cheeky, and has a sense of humour, and is now available right around Australia, including some regional centres as well as capital cities. *The Big Issue* has a small and hard-working editorial team led by the Editor, Alan Attwood, a former *Age* journalist and Walkley Award-winner.

Authorised vendors purchase the magazine for \$2.50 and sell it for \$5.00, making a clear 100 % profit. Selling the magazine also boosts vendors' self-esteem and independence. It has a positive effect on their lives and is reflected in *The Big Issue* motto: "helping people help themselves". For purchasers of the magazine it really is a good read for a good deed.

Another initiative of The Big Issue is The Community Street Soccer program. The Street Soccer program, now up and running in Geelong, is open to both males and females from 16 years of age. Players come from all walks of life, but all have been marginalised or experienced difficulties in life. The program provides training sessions with coaches who are encouraging and supportive; staff often work closely with players. Where possible, they link them with services or support-services, as appropriate. The many benefits the program provides include improved confidence and self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and health and fitness. Also – and most importantly – it's a lot of fun!

The Street Soccer program is desperately looking for players, as we currently have approximately 10 players participating, we would love to see this number double and with more women becoming involved. We meet on the Waterfront, opposite the carousel, every Thursday from 4pm – 6pm, rain, hail or shine. If we can arrange a large number of people interested in the outer Geelong areas, we would look at running a bus transport to collect and return players on the night. Again, this option would depend on numbers, locations and commitment for those not able to travel to the waterfront.

Street Soccer also offers events such as state camps and national championships. Each year, a team is sent to the Homeless World Cup – an annual event that brings together participants from Street Soccer programs around the world. Some of the other Street Soccer sites in Australia include Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney, Canberra, Ballarat, Shepparton, Broadmeadows, Morwell and Dandenong. From humble beginnings several years ago, the program is now on target to engage 3000 participants in 30 sites across Australia. In every way, participants really are kicking on.

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